MEDITATIONS
ON THE GOSPELS

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MEDITATIONS ON THE GOSPELS

FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR

Translated from the French of
PÈRE MÉDAILLE, S.J.

EDITED BY
THE REV. WILLIAM H. EYRE, S.J.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTICE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE following are some of the chief changes made in this new Edition of MÉDAILLE.

1. The Scripture texts quoted in the former edition from the Vulgate have been omitted, and the English of the Douay Version has been substituted. This will be a convenience to those who do not understand Latin.

2. The running title at the head of each page, which in the previous edition was always "Meditations on the Gospels," is now made to refer to the respective week of the Church's Calendar, rendering it much more easy to find any particular Meditation.

3. A few words in the three Points of each meditation have been printed in thicker type, with the purpose of facilitating the remembrance of the salient points to be pondered.

4. Three meditations have been added on the Feasts of the recently canonized Saints of the Society of Jesus — Saint Peter Claver, the Mis-

sionary Priest, Saint John Berchmans, the Scholastic, and Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez, the Lay-Brother. These are marked in the Table of Contents by a double asterisk.

5. The meditations not written by Father Médaille himself, which were distinguished in the first edition by an asterisk at the beginning of each, are now specified by that mark in the Table of Contents.

6. The book has practically been recast, and the phrasing of the meditations has been considerably altered, with the design of eliminating expressions and idioms which were believed to be more French than English.

It is hoped that these changes will be looked upon as improvements.

W. H. EYRE, S.J.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY,
March 25, 1896.

PREFACE.

Father Médaille was a French Jesuit, who labored assiduously, some two centuries ago, in his native country, for thirty long years, in the pulpit and the confessional. He died in 1709 at an advanced age. His *Meditations on the Gospels* have been translated into Latin, Italian, Spanish, German and Dutch. This is the first English version. It will bring the number of editions hitherto published to within a fraction of forty.

It is evident that the book possesses merit which has been widely recognized. Some meditation books disappoint highly educated people, because the points are unduly spun out. Father Médaille is brief, terse and suggestive. Each of his meditations contains germs of thought that spontaneously, as it were, run into natural developments, and very many are fertile with seedlings that quickly grow up into fruit-bearing plants. The author, moreover, writes soberly and is singularly free from far-fetched sentiment. Ninety-nine out of every hundred Englishmen dislike anything that seems to savor of affectation or unreality. At times, too, complaints are heard that what amount of thought is to be found in the first point of a meditation is reproduced in a milder form in the second and all but vanishes in the third. But as Médaille composed his book for the use of members of his Order, these meditations could not be otherwise than practical and solid. And once more, they are methodical. The gospels are contemplated in the order of the Church's festivals and liturgy, beginning with the Precursor of Christ and ending with the fulness of Pentecostal grace.

Occasionally, though very seldom, a few words have been altered — where the author makes reference to religious life — in order that people living in the world may not think that these meditations are unsuited to them. The Editor has found more than sufficient warrant to justify these slight changes, in the example of Father Bolle, a French Jesuit, who published an edition of Médaille, omitting the meditations on the Jesuit Saints and all special allusions to religious life in the Society.

The Editor has, in addition, taken upon himself to tone down some expressions concerning the number of the saved, which possibly would be more susceptible of misinterpretation at the present day than two hundred years ago. When Médaille wrote his book, textual criticism was not in as advanced a stage as it now is, and, in the spiritual writings of many authors, Jansenism was struggling for the mastery with genuine piety.

In England we are accustomed, more perhaps than the inhabitants of other countries, to take words in their literal meaning. It is, therefore, more necessary here than elsewhere that preachers and writers should guard themselves against the risk of exaggeration in phrase or inference.

There are supplementary meditations, written in 1818, after the manner of Father Médaille by the Abbé Vernier, of the Missionary Fathers at Besançon, in which town some of the best editions of the work have been published at various times. These are marked in the Table of Contents with an asterisk. Médaille wrote three meditations only for each week, as every meditation was meant to be repeated on the following day.

It may be remarked, in conclusion, that no subject could possibly be pondered with greater profit than the words which fell from the sacred lips of our Blessed Lord. Hence it would seem assured that any one making daily use of these *Meditations on the Gospels* must be laying up in his mind a vast treasure of spiritual wealth.

W. H. EYRE, S.J.

Feast of the Purification, 1891.

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To the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

It is under thy protection I have worked, most worthy Mother of my God, whensoever I have preached to the people the truths of the Gospel of thy Son; and I have always felt complete confidence that thou wouldst obtain for me the help necessary to fulfil so high a mission. Thou hast never refused me such aid in a multitude of circumstances in my life, when I have implored it; and the most sensible joy I could have in this world is to be convinced, by the favors wherewith thou hast loaded me, that to thee I might address myself as to my powerful protectress. This, then, is what I have ever done in course of my preaching. I have begged thee day by day, in behalf of my hearers, that it might please thee to obtain from thy Son the light to know what He required from them, and the strength to carry it out. And for myself, I have entreated thee to obtain for me grace to treat this sacred word so worthily as never to alter it in the least degree, but to make it enter into the mind and heart of my hearers as pure as it came forth from the mouth of thy Divine Son, incarnate in thy virginal womb.

I ask thee now the like favors, O immaculate Virgin, for those who shall meditate in private on what I have told them from the pulpit. I have collected in this little book, which I dedicate to thee, the principles of our faith, the truths of the Gospel, the practice of Christian virtue, and the leading maxims of spiritual life. I send them forth in unadorned simplicity, persuaded that the truths of religion are of themselves capable of making their due impression, and of awakening in the heart the love of virtue and holiness.

Yet Meditation alone suffices not to produce so good an effect. The grace of thy Son is absolutely needful. I beg it from thee, O Blessed Virgin, for all those who desire to profit by these Meditations. If thou dost grant it them, as I dare to hope, they will be like those flourishing trees of which Scripture speaks, which, planted by the side of running waters, bear fruit in abundance. They will be watered with a shower of graces and blessings, while meditating day and night on the law of God; and they will produce fruit which will never fail.

How happy should I be, could I contribute somewhat towards such inestimable good, and were I myself to profit by what I offer to the public! This is what I ask from thee, O most worthy Mother of my God, with the deepest veneration of which I am capable, and with a sincere desire to honor thee, which shall last as long as my life endures.

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE METHOD OF MENTAL PRAYER.

Mental prayer is a raising and applying of our mind and heart to God, in order to express to Him our allegiance, to lay bare to Him our needs and thus to become better, for His glory's sake.

Mental prayer comprises three parts, namely, the beginning or preparation, the body of the prayer and the conclusion.

I.

Three Things are to be done at the Beginning of the Meditation.

1. We must place ourselves by an act of faith in presence of God, believing firmly that God is everywhere, that He is in the place where we are and in our hearts; this leads us to adore Him and to behave with due reverence before His Divine Majesty.

2. We must acknowledge ourselves unworthy by reason of our sins to appear before God; we must implore His pardon for them by an act of contrition and unite ourselves with our Lord Jesus in order that we may appear before His Father and pray to Him in Christ's name.

3. We must acknowledge that of ourselves we are incapable of meditating in a way profitable to our salvation, and hence must implore the help of the Holy Spirit.

II.

The Body of the Meditation contains three Points.

1. In the first point, we must consider the subject of the meditation with relation to Our Lord, noting carefully what He said, did or thought on this matter, and then paying Him our homage, treasuring in our minds His thoughts, His words, His actions; praising them, loving them, and filling our heart with feelings of gratitude; to which may at times be added acts of admiration, of joy or of compassion, according to the nature of the subject. If the meditation be made on the perfections of God or on the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, we should adore these and perform in their honor other suitable acts of religion.

2. In the second point, we must consider the subject of our meditation with relation to ourselves, (1) examining what we ought to do, or to avoid, for our sanctification; and next, in order to lead us more effectually to embrace virtue and to fly from vice, we must try to convince our mind of our duty by the consideration of the motives and the reasons best calculated to bind us to it. (2) We must then contrast our conduct with our obligations in this matter and reflect seriously as to whether we have been faithful to our duty; and, as this inquiry will make us aware of many failings, we should humble ourselves and elicit acts of contrition for past sins, of shame for our present condition, of desire to do better in future, and should evoke other affections suitable to the considerations we have made. (3) Lastly, at sight of our past shortcomings and present weakness, we should have recourse to God and earnestly entreat Him for grace to be

better in future, appealing, in order to obtain it, to the merits of Jesus Christ and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and of the Saints.

3. In the third point, in order to co-operate with the grace which we have asked from God, we must make good resolutions, suited to the subject of our meditation, our wishes, and our needs: which resolutions should be not only general, but also particular, for the time present and actual circumstances; they should be practical and lead us to surmount obstacles and to employ fitting means; finally, they should be accompanied by distrust of ourselves and confidence in God.

III.

The Conclusion of the Meditation includes three Things.

1. We should thank God for the favors He has bestowed on us during the meditation.

2. We should crave His pardon for the faults we have committed in it.

3. We should ask Him to bless our resolutions, the present day, our life and our death.

Then we make the spiritual bouquet, which is merely the choice of some good thoughts or of some holy affections that have touched us most during the meditation, in order that during the day we may be mindful of them from time to time.

We end by placing our resolutions and the fruit of our meditation under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, and we may say for this purpose the prayer, *Sub tuum præsidium confugimus,* etc. (We fly to thy patronage, etc.)

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

HOW TO MAKE OUR MEDITATION WELL AND DERIVE FROM IT THE FRUIT GOD REQUIRES.

Certain things there are which we must observe before the meditation, others during the meditation, others again after the meditation.

Before the Meditation.

1. We should dispose ourselves for it by avoiding sin and by purity of heart, by interior and exterior recollection and by the pure intention of seeking therein nothing but the glory of God and our progress in virtue.

2. We must prepare the subject for meditation and with this purpose read or listen to it attentively the evening before and in the morning go over it in our mind; moreover, we should consider in particular what were the feelings, the sayings or the actions of the Son of God as regards this subject; what acts we shall perform in token of our duty, under the same point; the considerations, reflections, affections and petitions we shall make in the second point and the resolutions we ought to make in the third.

During the Meditation.

1. It is not necessary to make in one and the same meditation many considerations, nor to perform all the acts noted down in the Method; and when profitably occupied in making some consid-

eration, or in producing some holy affection, such as regret for our sins, the love of God, etc., we must not quit it under pretext of passing on to any other.

Nevertheless, the part whereon we should dwell longest are the affections, petitions and resolutions, which are the main thing in meditation.

2. Besides the affections noted above, we may in the course of the meditation elicit others, such as fear of the judgment of God, hope in His mercy, obedience to His law, zeal for His glory, love of our neighbor and compassion for his miseries spiritual and temporal, contempt of creatures and of ourselves, condemnation of the false maxims of the world, protestation that we wish to believe with all our heart the truths on which we meditate, etc.

We should endeavor to draw out the affections or make the petitions and resolutions only in the order prescribed in the Method; but should we find ourselves drawn to make them from the outset or elsewhere than in the parts indicated, it is well to follow such attraction without delay.

If we feel ourselves attracted to some other method of prayer, we should submit it to our director and follow his advice.

3. Though distractions, dryness and even temptations come to us during meditation, we should not be discouraged or leave it off, but should persevere in it, steadily driving away distractions, generously resisting temptations and enduring with patience all weariness and aridity.

Besides the petitions we make for our own necessities, it is well, at the end of the meditation, to pray for the needs of the Church, for our relatives, friends, etc.

After the Meditation.

1. We must take care to keep up during the day the feelings we had during meditation and not to lose them by applying ourselves at once with too much ardor and eagerness to the business or employments of our state of life.

2. It is well to write down sometimes what has touched us most during meditation and the resolutions we have made, particularly during retreats and when our director thinks it expedient; and it will be useful to read again and again, from time to time, what we have written.

3. Finally, we should try, during the day, to recall to mind the good resolutions we have made and watch for opportunities to put them in practice.

PREPARATORY PRAYER BEFORE MEDITATION.

My God, my Creator, my last end and my all, I firmly believe that Thou art here present, that I am wholly in Thee, and Thou in me; that Thine eyes are fixed on me as though there were only myself in the world for Thee to think of. Convinced of this, I adore Thee, O my God, with the most profound veneration whereof I am capable, uniting my adoration with that which Thou dost receive from Thine angels and Thy saints in heaven and on earth.

I offer to Thee this meditation, O my God. I wish to make it for Thy glory and the salvation of my soul.

I renounce all the distractions I may have during it, whether proceeding from the instability of my mind or from the artifices of the enemy of my salvation.

Adorable Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I consecrate to You my memory, my understanding and my will. Vouchsafe to grant me the attention, enlightenment and affections needed to profit by this meditation.

It is from Thee, kind Savior, that I expect such help and favors: *"Teach us to pray, O Lord."* Dispose my mind and heart to learn what Thou wouldst have me do and to carry it out. Teach me what I ought to ask from Thee and how to ask it. Without Thee, all my efforts are in vain.

Blessed Virgin, Mother of my God, my holy Guardian Angel, my holy Patron and all the Saints who are now enjoying God in heaven, obtain for me the grace to begin this meditation well and to end it with the fruit God intends me to obtain from it.

MEDITATIONS

ON THE GOSPELS FOR THE YEAR.

The First Sunday in Advent.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.

POINT I.—Let us consider the **preparations** for this mighty event. The whole world will stand aghast at the signs which will appear in the heavens and on earth. The universe will be reduced to ashes. The angels will summon all mankind before the tribunal of the Supreme Judge. All men will rise again; they will be parted asunder by order of this Judge, Who will descend from heaven resplendent in majesty and full of the wrath and indignation reserved for the final ruin of impenitent sinners. Let us not be of their number; and, if we have ever belonged to it, let us appease His anger—let us do penance.

POINT II.—Let us consider the **judgment** itself. Jesus Christ, as Redeemer, will upbraid the reprobate with the abuse of His graces. As *Judge,* He will make manifest their sins; He will condemn them publicly. As *Sovereign,* He will assign their punishment. Let us make a holy use of God's graces, and we shall not dread His reproaches. Let us make expiation for our sins, and they will be made known at the judgment for our glory alone. Let us secure the love of this Sovereign Lord by a sincere contrition, and we shall be shielded from His justice.

POINT III.— Let us consider the **carrying out** of this judgment. The just, covered with glory and full of happiness, will rise to heaven with the Savior. The wicked, overwhelmed with shame and full of despair, will be hurled down to hell; and then the two eternities — the happy and the miserable — will begin. Let us ponder these eternities; let us dread the day of judgment, that will decide which eternity is to be our own.

Monday.

ON THE SENTENCE IN FAVOR OF THE JUST.

"*Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess ye the kingdom*" (ST. MATT. xxv. 34).

POINT I.— "**Come,**" from the labor, persecutions and miseries of life, to eternal rest, reward and happiness. Come to Me, Whom you have followed, for Whom you have longed, Whom you have loved. Come to your God, Who is your last end and your supreme good. To deserve to hear such welcome language, we must follow our Lord, must work and suffer for Him, must yearn to see Him and refer to Him, as to our end, all the actions of our life.

Point II.—“**Ye blessed of My Father.**” “Blessed” in time by the choice which God has made of them through His love and His graces; “blessed” at the judgment day by the praises which He will bestow upon them; “blessed” for all eternity. Such blessing shelters them from all kinds of ill. It loads them with benefits and makes these their own for evermore. Let us thank God for having through His mercy begun to pour upon us His blessings and for having given us the hope that we shall be for ever “blessed” in paradise.

Point III.—“**Possess ye the kingdom;**” that is to say, all kinds of blessings; for royalty implies sovereign power, glory, riches, fulness of God. A king has whatever he desires. *“Prepared for you from the foundation of the world;”* in order that they may know the goodness of God, Who thought of them and prepared for them a kingdom whereof they will never lose possession, since it was made for them; and that their glory may be greater, to them He will give this kingdom as fruit of their merits and good works, which He will extol before all. Is there any difficulty in the service of God that should not be gladly overcome to obtain this kingdom?

Tuesday.

ON THE SENTENCE PRONOUNCED AGAINST THE WICKED.

"Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (ST. MATT. xxv. 41).

POINT I.—"**Depart from Me.**" Our Lord will reject sinners; He will drive them from His presence, from His heart and, were it possible, from His thoughts. They have rejected Him, and He will be avenged. He will shut them out from His paradise and from the possession of their God. All the ties which once bound them to Him must be broken, and suffer they must in such estrangement a violence, a misery, a despair that will never end, and which make up the real hell. Let us cling to our Lord throughout life, and He will not reject us at the judgment.

POINT II.—"**Ye cursed.**" The wicked will be cursed by God in their body, in their soul and in the powers of both: a malediction that includes alienation from the love of God, execration, aversion; the deprivation of all blessings, save that of existence; a deluge of ills, which will overwhelm them; a relentlessness on the part of God, Who will never be appeased, and Who will never foster any feeling of kindness for them. The wicked have by their disorders drawn down on themselves this curse; let us not follow their example.

POINT III.—"**Into everlasting fire,** *which* *was prepared for the devil and his angels.*" Into fire — the most horrible of all torments; a fire that will scorch body and soul; a fire which can never be extinguished. It is eternal; a fire in which the devils burn and, in burning, are the executioners of divine justice and tormentors of the damned. To manifest the justice of His sentence, this angered Judge will make known the sins that oblige Him to pronounce it. "He who is not awakened by such thunder-claps," says St. Augustine, "is not asleep, he is dead."

Wednesday.

THE SINNER ARRAIGNED AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT.

POINT I.— **By his own faith,** which he has betrayed and dishonored in giving himself up to sin and to a sensual and worldly life, or which he may have renounced to abandon himself to his caprices and impiety. Let us, following the light of faith, listen to the voice of God, if we would not suffer reproach at the judgment day.

POINT II.— **By his own reason.** By his own reason will the sinner be convinced that he has not listened to it, has availed himself of it only to excuse and justify his passions and to hide the backslidings it reproached him with. Reason condemns our irregular appetites and imposes silence on our passions: let us, without deceiving ourselves, listen to it now, lest it rise up against us at the day of judgment.

POINT III.—**By his own confession.** The sinner, at the judgment, seeing his faults, no longer in a confused way, but as they really are and as God will make them known to him, taking in his whole life at a glance, even as if he had lived but a single moment, will condemn himself: *"Truly have I sinned . . . and have acted thus."* He will give himself up to despair and will entreat all creatures to hide him from the wrath of God: *"Hide us . . . from the wrath of the Lamb"* (APOC. vi. 16). Blind that I am, shall I wait for the judgment of God before I condemn my wickedness? No, Lord; I will so judge and treat myself henceforth with severity, that I may escape from the rigor of Thy judgments.

Thursday.

ON THE NECESSITY OF A GENERAL JUDGMENT.

POINT I.—*"We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ;"* so says St. Paul (2 COR. v. 10). First, **for the glory of God.** The world, seeing the wicked prosper and the just forgotten and in suffering, murmurs against God; but God Himself has foretold it all: *"The world shall rejoice: and you shall be made sorrowful"* (ST. JOHN xvi. 20). He allows all this for valid reasons, and at the General Judgment He will make manifest the truth of His word, the wisdom of His conduct and the faithfulness of His promises, by the justice He will render to all: *"The Lord shall be known when He executeth judgments"* (Ps. ix. 17). Let us bow down before His designs and despise the judgment of the world.

POINT II.— **For the confusion of sinners.** These make just souls suffer by their scoffings, their stratagems and their influence; they triumph in their hypocrisy, their imposture and their secret profligacy; nay, they glory, may be, in their debaucheries; but, at the judgment, the whole universe will know the rendings of their conscience and will deride their boasted triumph, on seeing them condemned to eternal torments. Let us spare no effort in order to escape a confusion so deadly.

POINT III.— **For the consolation of the just.** They were often unknown, despised, persecuted and afflicted in this life; but then they will be replenished with the blessings of the Lord; they will be the object of veneration to the angels and of the esteem of all men, nay, even of the reprobate, who will render homage to their virtues. Let us sacrifice everything so as to merit so great a happiness.

Friday.

"The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (ST. MATT. iii. 2).

POINT I.— We are not penetrated with fear of the judgment, because we only **think of it as**

something afar. Yet, may it be said, this judgment is at hand, because we are only removed from it by a short space of time, which must soon pass away, which will seem to us very short, when it is sped by, and which really is short indeed compared with an eternity of happiness or of misery that will follow it. However distant the last day may be, let us convince ourselves of the shortness of the time which separates us from it: *"The time is short"* (I COR. vii. 29). Let us employ time, not to reassure ourselves against the rigor of the judgment, but to prepare to meet it.

POINT II.— The last judgment is, in some measure, as **near us as the hour of our death,** since, at the instant of death, this judgment with all its horrors begins to be verified as regards each one of us. The sun, moon and stars disappear from our sight; the universe is for us as truly destroyed as if it had been consumed by fire. Then shall we appear before the Supreme Judge of the living and the dead; shall receive from His mouth the sentence which will decide irrevocably our fate for all eternity; then shall begin that Great Day which is the last, since it will never have an end. Let us no longer consider this day as far off; let us employ the short time remaining to us in going over our years in the bitterness of our soul and in propitiating our Judge by sincere penitence.

POINT III.— Not only is the judgment of God near, but **at any moment it may overtake** us and will surprise us in reality, if we be not watchful. The Son of Man will come at the moment when we least expect it: *"at what hour you think not"* (ST. LUKE xii. 40). Happy is he who shall not be surprised in an unfit state. Let us fear this last day, let us watch, let us always be ready.

Saturday.

ON THE PREDESTINATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

POINT I.— From all eternity God chose Mary to be His Mother, destining her by such choice for the **highest dignity** which ever can be. All that is greatest in heaven and on earth is as nothing compared to this eminence. Mary is to be the Queen of men and angels and the Mediatrix of intercession between God and men. Let us thank God for this exaltation of our kind Mother, because it is for love of us that He has raised her so high.

POINT II.— God predestined Mary for the **most perfect holiness** that can be conceived. Never was there to be in her either sin or imperfection; her justifying grace was to surpass that of all men and angels; she was to possess all virtues in the highest degree. There never has been, never will there be anything like her actual graces and the merits which she was to acquire together with these graces. Let us beg of God some communication of this holiness; let us strive diligently to acquire it.

POINT III.— God predestined Mary for the **highest glory** which any mere creature will ever possess in heaven. All that is not God will be below Mary. Let us congratulate her on so much greatness. Let us labor to deserve her sheltering care.

The Second Sunday in Advent.

"*Prepare ye the way of the Lord*" (ST. MATT. iii. 3).

POINT I.— God expended four thousand years in **preparing the world** to receive Jesus Christ. He adopted a particular people for His coming. He gave them a law and special ceremonial. He sent prophets to instruct them and trace out for them how to qualify themselves to receive their Deliverer. A mystery such as that of the Incarnation of a God demands precautions so manifold. Let us marvel at the grandeur of this mystery: let us adore and thank the wisdom of God, which has brought it home to us.

POINT II.— Jesus Christ ought to be **born anew** in our hearts: His spirit should come to quicken us, to direct our feelings and our conduct, to purify and sanctify our souls. Do not advantages so great deserve that we should prepare ourselves to receive Him? Let us address ourselves to this Savior-God by frequent lifting up of the heart towards Him; let us say to Him with His beloved disciple: *"Come, Lord Jesus"* (Apoc. xxii. 20). Come, Lord Jesus, by the abundance of Thy grace; come to be born afresh in my heart.

Point III.— The Church wishes her children to **prepare themselves** for the coming of the Messias, and she devotes the time of Advent to this intent. Let us lend a hand to her purposes, knowing well that we shall not profit by the coming of our Savior, if we make not ourselves ready to receive Him. The Jews did not profit by it, because, notwithstanding God's solicitude in their behalf, they prepared not themselves for His coming. We shall not receive the graces Jesus Christ comes to bring into the world, if we labor not to make ourselves worthy of them in accordance with the sentiments which the Church inspires.

Monday.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord" (St. Matt. iii. 3).

Point I.— The first disposition we should have in order to make ourselves fit to receive Jesus Christ is to conceive **true desires** that He should come into our souls. Daniel was heard because he was a *"man of desires"* (Daniel x. 2). All the patriarchs longed even as he did for the coming of the Messias. We should ourselves long for it, that is, we should wish the spirit of Jesus Christ to arouse us, to guide our feelings and our conduct, deliver us from sin, sanctify our souls and save us. Let us say then with the just under the old law: "*Come, Lord, delay no longer.*"

Point II.— **These desires should be earnest.** Is it possible to be too eager for such great blessings? If we only feebly wish for them, it shows we value them but little and hence are unworthy of them. Let us think of the benefits which the coming of the Messias ought to procure for us — namely, deliverance from hell and recovery of the right to our heavenly inheritance — and our desires will revive and become more earnest.

Point III.— **Our desires should be generous**: that is, strong enough to determine us to do a certain violence to ourselves and to take such amount of trouble as the coming of the Messias exacts from us. We wish, possibly, that Jesus Christ should come into our souls; but we would fain He should cost us naught: that is but a feeble desire, nay rather, a fancied desire. Let us resolve to make all needful sacrifices and adopt suitable practices; let us beseech from God the strength we need for this: but let us implore it with a sincere, earnest and whole-hearted desire.

Tuesday.

"*Prepare ye the way of the Lord*" (St. Matt. iii. 3).

Point I.—The Church prepares her children for the coming of Jesus Christ through **the word of God.** It is in this view that she multiplies her instructions during Advent. Let us go punctually to listen to them; it is our mother who speaks, can we refuse to hear her? If we have not the opportunity of hearing the word of God, let us make up for it by reading pious books and by bearing in mind the truths of salvation.

Point II.—**Prayer** is another means the Church employs to prepare us to receive Jesus Christ. She prolongs the divine office during Advent. Let us unite with the Church and recommend ourselves to her prayers during this holy season; let us address one of these prayers to God each day, to entreat Him to dispose us Himself to receive His graces.

Point III.—Finally, the Church prepares her children by **penance:** she puts on the color of mourning, withholds the canticles of joy and suspends the solemn celebration of marriage. Formerly she enjoined continuous fasting, and at the present day many religious orders still practice such fasting and abstinence. Let us have recourse to penance, let us not refuse at least to practice some mortifications; let us see which are suitable to our condition and perform them with good heart.

Wednesday.

ST. JOHN CAME TO PREACH THE BAPTISM OF PENANCE.

POINT I.— The repentance St. John preached in order to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ, and to which the Church invites us in a special manner, consists first in ceasing from and in **abhorring sin.** Can Jesus Christ come into a heart attached to sin? Can we say we are penitent if we go on sinning? Let us abstain from every forbidden pleasure, let us be reconciled to our enemies, and let us restore what we are unjustly retaining.

POINT II.— To be penitent, it suffices not to renounce certain sins, we must **give up all.** We are willing, perhaps, to make some sacrifice costing little, but is there no other from which we shrink? There is some favorite sin — that into which we so often fall, and have fallen for so long a time; the sin we try to excuse, which our conscience condemns, but which we ourselves do not like to condemn. We must now renounce it entirely and take measures not to relapse into it, measures we must carry out in practice.

POINT III.— Not only must we renounce sin, but the **very occasion** thereof. Sin we detest not and do not renounce, so long as we are fond of what leads to it. We must withdraw from companionship that involves us in dissipation; must snap those ties that hold us fast bound; break off from that connection which is ruining us; cease from entering such a house; avoid that person and, in short, fly from all occasion of sin.

Thursday.

ST. JOHN CAME TO PREACH THE BAPTISM OF PENANCE.

POINT I.— To be penitent, it is not enough to cease from offending God: we must hold a sincere regret and **true sorrow for having offended God.** The tears of penance and grievings of the heart wash the soul and cleanse it from sin. Do our sins really afflict us? Do we not abide in a state of sin with as much calm of mind as if we were in grace with God? If we be in such a pitiable condition, let us humble ourselves and abandon it.

POINT II.—In order to get true regret for our sins, we must implore it **from God**: such regret cannot be obtained without grace; and grace is, in general, only vouchsafed to prayer. Let us often say to God: Lord, touch my soul, that I may feel the misfortune I have had in offending Thee, and that I may be earnestly grieved for having so done. Let us practice some good works; let us recur to the holy sacrifice of the Mass, to mortification and alms-giving, so as to obtain a fitting hatred of sin.

POINT III.— To have such regret for sin, it is not enough to entreat it from God: we must ponder over the **grievousness of sin** and its consequences. Were I convinced that by committing a fault I might lose one of my eyes or incur the disgrace of some prince, I should hold in dread such fault, should think of it with horror and should take all care to avoid it. Is it not a far greater evil to lose my soul and to incur the hatred of God, as I do by sinning? Let us often be mindful of this and reflect on it seriously: for by such reflections, grace aiding, we shall conceive due regret for sin.

Friday.

ON THE PENANCE WHICH ST. JOHN PREACHES.

POINT I.— St. John preaches penance, and affords example of it. Since his preaching **heaven is taken by violence.** We must renounce the world and its pleasures, bear our cross, conquer our inclinations, resist our passions, love our enemies and hate and persecute ourselves. This is the narrow way of the Gospel, the way strewn with thorns and stones that leads to heaven. Do we keep to it? Are we not following an opposite path?

POINT II.— It is **urgent** to walk in this way. Sinners we are and must do penance; Christians we are and must follow Jesus Christ; we are made for heaven and must merit it by such hardships. Does it not seem to us that these reasons are meant for others, and not for us?

POINT III.— This way is rough **only at the outset,** when we are deliberating whether we will follow it or not. So soon as we walk in it with fervor, it becomes smooth and pleasant. The virtue which we practice, interior grace, the hope of reaching an end infinitely lovely sweetens suffering and deprives penance of harshness. The saints were full of joy, treading a path which to us seems uninviting. If we walk in the track of the saints and of the Saint of saints, Jesus Christ, we shall experience the joy which caused them to live contentedly.

Saturday.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

POINT I.— We relapse into our faults, and the same sins come back in all our confessions, because we examine only their sources and do not **strive to remove** them from us. We accuse ourselves of distractions in prayer, of words against charity, of falsehoods and of little acts of sensuality, and we try not to check the lack of devotion, secret aversions, the spirit of pride and the ill-regulated love of ourselves, which are the originating causes of our faults. We lop off the twigs and the branches, while leaving the trunk and the roots. Ought we to be surprised if the same things are ever repeating themselves?

POINT II.— We relapse into our faults, because before confession we do not consider enough their **grievousness** or their **consequences.** Did we think seriously of the hideousness of our sins, of the insult we offer to God and of the evils we draw down upon ourselves, we should not hark back to them so readily. If I knew that by relapsing into these faults I might contract a dangerous illness, lose one of my eyes, or incur the anger and reproaches of some monarch, I should not fall into them anew. Yet these evils are as nothing in comparison with those to which I expose myself.

POINT III.— We relapse into our faults, because we have not the **necessary contrition,** nor the **firm purpose** we should have. Should we not blush to break our word to a man whom we look up to and to whom we have been sincerely reconciled? We should be afraid to break it and therefore should not break it. Let us pay the like respect to God, our Sovereign, our Judge and Father.

Third Sunday in Advent.

ON THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE STATE WE ARE IN.

POINT I.— Let us ask the question which the Jews put to St. John: *"Who art Thou?"* and think **what we are.** It is uncertain if we are in a state of grace or of sin: no one can be quite sure. If we are in a state of grace, we do not know whether we shall persevere. In short, we know not what will be our lot for eternity, whether happy or miserable. There is no state, no virtue, no holiness, even, which can put an end to such uncertainty. Let us humble ourselves in fear, adoring the dispositions of God, Who wills that we should live in this uncertainty.

POINT II.— Everything **conspires to keep up this uncertainty** and this fear: the obstacles to our salvation which come from without, temptations, examples, occasions; hindrances that proceed from ourselves, our passions, our inclinations, our habits; the mystery of our perseverance and our predestination. These are powerful motives to check presumption and to excite vigilance.

POINT III.— In order to **reassure ourselves amid such uncertainty,** we should, in our fear, (1) fly from what may cause our ruin; (2) resist our domestic enemies; (3) hope in the goodness and mercy of a God Who died for our salvation; (4) ask day by day for the grace of perseverance.

Monday.

ON THE DECISION OF OUR FATE.

POINT I.— **We shall know it** in the very instant of our death. That moment will end all our uncertainty. If the tree fall to the south, it will remain there for ever, says the Holy Spirit. If it fall to the north, it will not rise again. See here our condition; for ever on a throne, or for ever in fetters; for ever happy in heaven, or for ever miserable in flames. Terrible moment, on which depends Eternity! Who will not dread it?

Point II.— If we would know what will be our fate after death, **we may know it now.** In order to know which way the tree will fall when it is cut down, we have only to notice towards which side it leans. Never will it fall to the south if it lean towards the north. If our inclinations, our wishes, our thoughts and our actions lead us heavenward, assuredly we shall go there; if they all lean towards hell, we shall fall into it. If we think it will be otherwise, we deceive ourselves.

Point III.— For our consolation, **we are able to alter our state.** A tree cannot change its position after it has grown old; but, with the help of grace, and by doing some violence to ourselves, we can change both our inclinations and our habits. We must, however, do this as soon as may be, for in course of time they become stronger, and at death act powerfully for good or for ill.

Tuesday.

On the Presence of God.

> *"There hath stood One in the midst of you, Whom you know not"* (St. John i. 26).

Point I.— God is present with us everywhere, **by His essence**; by the Divine Persons, and by His infinite perfections. He is without and within us. We need not go to heaven in order to find Him; not only is the Kingdom of God within us, but God Himself. Let us quicken our faith in this presence, let us yield Him the respect we owe Him and live with devoutness and trustfulness; let us speak to Him oftentimes and beg of Him help in our difficulties, consolation in our afflictions and enlightenment in our doubts.

POINT II.—God is present with us **by His knowledge.** He sees everything, He knows everything and He scrutinizes all our actions, wishes, and thoughts. The frequent thought of this presence will sanctify us; it will withdraw us from the evil which God must punish as Judge; it will lead us to the good which He will reward as Sovereign.

POINT III.—God is present with us **by His power and His action.** He acts everywhere and with all creatures; He preserves us, and He works in us and with us; He operates in our body and mind, naturally and supernaturally. He governs and He guides us. Let us thank Him for such abiding care, and let us strive to act aright. When we do this, God co-operates with complacency. Let us fly from every wrongdoing, in which God only co-operates with sorrow.

Wednesday.

ON THE WORDS: *"Who art Thou?"* (ST. JOHN i. 19).

POINT I.— With regard to the body, **we are a little clay** fashioned into some form originating from nothing, and destined for decay. See then one half of what we are. Where was our body during the centuries that are sped? What could be more lowly than its origin, its birth and its infirmities of childhood? Were it made of a noble and royal blood, such advantage would not be derived from ourselves, nor should we the less resemble the animals in the pitiableness of our birth: *"None of the kings had any other beginning of birth"* (WISDOM vii. 5). Let us humble ourselves and leave to God the glory of His blessings.

POINT II.— The actual **miseries of our body** should no less humble us. Despite all the care we may bestow upon it, it is ever the abode of decay and a mass of guilty flesh which ought to confound us by its brutish inclinations, a flesh liable to all kinds of illness and infirmities, which is fain to have recourse to the produce of the earth and the skins of beasts to keep it unharmed from the cold and heat. What folly to take glory in a body so despicable, or in the raiment which covers it! It is as though a man should boast of a plaster which he needs to hide an ulcer on his face.

POINT III.— What will this body become after all? Worn out by toil or enfeebled by idleness, and exhausted with old age, it will become a repulsive corpse, an infectious mass of decay, the food of worms, and in the end useless dust: *"Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return"* (GEN. iii. 19). Let us treat our body as a slave and deem it now a matter of confusion for us, lest it cause our confusion for eternity.

Thursday.

ON THE WORDS: *"Who art Thou?"* (ST. JOHN i. 19).

POINT I.— Our soul is the noblest part of our being. We have received it with all its faculties from God, as well as the body with its senses. A quick wit, a well-balanced judgment, and the extent of our knowledge, are proofs of the bountiful liberality of the Creator. In what then can we glory? *"Where is thy glory?"* says Holy Writ. We should use our talents for the glory of God and not be so unjust as to attribute any glory to ourselves.

POINT II.— Whatever knowledge we may have acquired, our minds are, nevertheless, very limited. We are involved in error as to many things, and are in ignorance of a still greater number. Mistakes we make every day, and the greatest minds often fall into most serious errors. Very little light have we, if we imagine we have a great deal.

Point III.— What ought to humble us still more is the waywardness of our will, which takes no delight in virtue, resists the light of reason and of grace, inclines us very frequently to evil and makes us so often fall into sin. We should blush at these humiliations, and still more because such manifold humiliations suffice not to lower our pride.

Friday.

On the Words: "*Who art Thou?*" (St. John i. 19).

Point I.— By the grace of God we are Christians, children of God, **brothers of Jesus Christ,** and joint-heirs with Him, destined to reign with Him in the kingdom of heaven for all eternity. What glorious privileges! Are our thoughts suited to our high destiny? We deceive and degrade ourselves, if, becoming unmindful of these great advantages, we boast of other things.

Point II.— By baptism, our bodies have become **members of Jesus Christ**, temples of the Holy Spirit and sanctuaries of the Divinity. Woe to us if by sin we defile them!

Point III.— Our soul is **the conquest of Jesus Christ.** By His grace it has become the friend, sister and even spouse of God. By the help of grace our soul is enabled to triumph over all the powers of hell, to rise to the knowledge and enjoyment of God and secure supreme and eternal happiness. Let us thank God for such inestimable favors; let us carefully profit by them and pray for the many Christians who surrender themselves to the devil and to eternal misery, for the baubles of this world.

Saturday.

ON TRUE DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

POINT I.— To be truly devout to the Mother of God, we must **fly from every kind of sin.** How can she love a soul which has within it a deformity so horrible as sin, the malice whereof is boundless? What fondness can she cherish for a creature rebellious and disobedient to her Son and who is His declared enemy? She is the Queen of saints and loves only saints, or sinners who wish to become saints and who have recourse to her protection and intercession.

POINT II.— To be truly devout to her, we must render to her every day **some particular worship.** *"Who watcheth at my gates daily."* This exactness is a token of the esteem, respect, love and trusting confidence we have for her. Happy they who accomplish this duty!

POINT III.— In order to be truly devout to our Lady, we must **imitate her**: must study and meditate on her actions, virtues and conduct and, when opportunity offers, must act as she did, that is, as she in our place would have done. What beautiful examples we find for every virtue in this heavenly model!

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

ST. JOHN HEARS IN PRISON OF THE WORKS OF CHRIST.

POINT I.— St. John was just, holy, the friend of God and His precursor; he is, nevertheless, **in prison** and loaded with chains for having done his duty and asserted the truth. It is the lot of good men to be persecuted. God wishes to purify them and to make manifest their virtues in order to augment their merits. We should rejoice if we are ill-treated while acting for God, since that is the portion of the saints.

POINT II.— St. John **is consoled in prison** through hearing of the actions and miracles of the Savior. We have a still more solid consolation in the example of our Lord persecuted, suffering and dying for us. Shall we dare to complain? Are we more innocent than He was?

POINT III.— St. John, when persecuted, **neglects not his duty.** He instructs his disciples, sends them to our Lord, and fulfils his mission of precursor. If we happen to be blamed or maltreated, we break our good resolutions, and we give up everything. Should we not fear to act for interest, human respect and self-love, rather than for God.

Monday.

"Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen" (St. Matt. xi. 4).

Point I.— St. John asked Jesus Christ if He were the Messias, and our Lord replies **by His works.** This is the true way of showing what we are, and of knowing it ourselves. Words, dress and social standing may deceive; acts and behavior never deceive. Am I able to say that my conduct and my actions betoken a Christian, a religious, a saint?

Point II.— **Works** are also an effectual means of **leading others to virtue.** Nothing is stronger than a good example; it shows that it is possible to act aright; it points out the manner of doing so, and causes confusion to those who act otherwise. We are all capable of preaching in this wise.

Point III.— **Works** have furthermore a wonderful power to **lead others into evil:** they teach vice to those who know it not; they disparage virtue, and encourage others in their licentiousness. There is no more violent temptation than that afforded by example. Let us not tempt others by giving them bad example, nor follow any such if set before us.

Tuesday.

"Blessed is he whosoever shall not be scandalized in Me!" (St. Matt. xi. 6).

Point I.— The maxims of the Gospel are to some people loathsome. We have to renounce the world and ourselves, carry our cross, aspire after blessings which belong to the future and die, in order to deserve and possess them. *"This saying is hard"* (St. John vi. 61). Jesus Christ is God. His maxims are true, salutary and holy. These maxims we should follow and endeavor to practice them obediently and joyfully.

Point II.— The **example set by our Savior** seems to repel men. Extreme poverty, a humility self-effacing and continual mortification, appear hard indeed to men who are self-worshipers, vain and sensual. Our Savior is God, and He cannot be mistaken in the choice He has made for Himself. We should be deceiving ourselves even as the world does, were we to choose the contrary to what Jesus Christ has chosen.

Point III.— **Our Savior's Cross** and His ignominious Death are the great subject of scandal to Jews and Gentiles alike. When we understand that this cross and death were necessary for the salvation of the world and that they have been the source of an infinite number of benefits, they become our glory and our consolation. This cross, however, scandalizes us when it proclaims that it behooves us to suffer if we would follow Jesus Christ crucified. Let us dispel this scandal and suffer, if need be, with patience, resignation and joy.

Wednesday.

"To the poor the Gospel is preached" (St. Luke vii. 22).

Point I.— Jesus Christ teaches us by His example the zeal which should animate us for the **salvation of the poor.** The rich often have the bread of the Word in abundance, while the poor are perishing for want of this food. Alas! they are deprived alike of spiritual and temporal help. Can we then remain insensible to their sore need and refuse them the help which is so much to the glory of God, so pleasing to Jesus Christ and so easy to us all?

Point II.— **It is consoling** to work for the salvation of the poor. They have generally more inducements to sin and fewer to virtue. When bestowing on them temporal help, advice can be given with greater freedom and they receive it with more docility. Let the poor then rejoice in their condition, and let the ministers of the Lord reanimate their zeal that they may gather in so rich and so easy a harvest in taking care of the poor.

Point III.— The spiritual services rendered to the poor are generally **more meritorious**: charity is purer, the artifices of self-love are less to be feared, faith alone quickens and sustains. The gain is greater, and the risk is less. How many services rendered to the great and the rich will receive no other reward than applause and reputation! If only we were to consult our own true advantage, we should exert ourselves more willingly for the poor.

Thursday.

ON POVERTY OF SPIRIT.

POINT I.— Not only does Jesus Christ preach the Gospel to the poor; but He teaches **poverty of spirit** to all His followers. It causes the poor to live in resignation, patience and assured confidence; it obliges the rich to detach their hearts from the goods of earth and to moderate and keep in check the desire of hoarding: "*those that buy as those that possess not*" (1 COR. vii. 30). Let us probe our heart and purify it from all attachment to the things of earth if we would have Jesus Christ to acknowledge us as His followers.

POINT II.— Poverty of spirit makes a Christian who has wealth **fear for his position,** so different from the example and from the maxims of Jesus Christ and so apt to foster the passions. Let us pity the lot of the rich and tremble for ourselves if we place our consolation in the goods of the world.

POINT III.— Poverty of spirit obliges a Christian to **anticipate the danger of riches**, to repair the abuse he has made of them, to retrench luxury and restrain vanity, to use his possessions in a manner agreeable to God, with gratitude and fear, and relieve the poor out of his superfluity. Have we so acted in the past? Are we anxious to do so in the future? We are Christians in name only if we practice not this virtue, which Jesus Christ has preached to us, as well by His words as by His example.

Friday.

ON THE DOUBT OF ST. JOSEPH.

POINT I.— St. Joseph was just: he reverenced, honored and loved the Blessed Virgin; but, unaware of what was taking place, he had a misgiving with regard to the Queen of Virgins. Undergoing this trial, he showed **prudence** by concealing suspicions; **wisdom** in seeking for a remedy; **charity** in suspending his judgment and treating his spouse with all tenderness. Let us practice the like virtues when we see, or fancy we see, something faulty in the conduct of others.

POINT II.— The Blessed Virgin, when suffering from these painful suspicions, took refuge in **humility, silence, trust in God and prayer.** She suffered on this most trying occasion without complaint and without disclosing what would have justified her triumphantly; leaving all to the providence of her God and consoling herself with Him in prayer. If, in order to prove us, this same Providence should allow us to be suspected or groundlessly accused, let us imitate our holy Mother.

POINT III.— God **vindicated the Blessed Virgin gloriously** and put an end to the grief of the just-minded Joseph by revealing to him the great mystery; thereupon the esteem, friendship and complete confidence of this husband and wife became greater than ever. Let us make over to this kind Providence the care of our justification and of our peace, convinced that God will make known our innocence and clear away whatever might tarnish or sully it.

Saturday, or for Christmas Eve.

ON THE JOURNEY FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM.

POINT I.— The Blessed Virgin, feeling that the time of her delivery has come, leaves her home, her relatives and friends, deprives herself of the help she might expect from them and sets out in an inclement season; she performs the journey with much inconvenience and undergoes this, though not obliged to do so, in order to obey the edict of a proud and selfish monarch. She saw **in everything the will of her God,** Who had His particular designs on her and her Divine Son; she adored them and cheerfully submitted herself to them. In imitation of her, let us obey God, accepting with a deep-seated faith the injunctions of those who rule us as coming from Him.

Point II.— Upon this journey Mary went with joy to **accomplish the will of God**; with patience under the hardships which the road, the season and her poverty caused her; with earnest desire soon to behold the Redeemer, her Son, in all her devout prayers and meditations. Let us conform our behavior to that of our holy Mother.

Point III.— After the inconveniences of the journey and repeated repulses which these holy travelers met with near Bethlehem, they were driven to take **shelter in a hole in the rock** — a deserted stable. Such is the palace into which the Queen of the universe enters and in which the God of heaven and earth chooses to be born. Such contempt, rejection, poverty, humiliation and abandonment should teach us to endure similar destitution, should God subject us to it for the sake of His honor.

Christmas Day.

Point I.— After having dwelt on the poverty, humiliation and sufferings of the Savior born in the stable, we should be convinced that He has placed Himself in this condition in order **to be our Redeemer.** He suffers to make expiation for my sins; He offers to His Father what He endures, to appease His anger; He longs to be able to suffer more for me and to die on the cross to complete the work of my redemption. Had some lowly person passed the night in the open air and endured the bitter cold for my sake, to deliver me from an illness — had he offered himself to spend his life in suchwise, I should love him, protect him, never forget him. What ought I not to do for my God, Who has done far more for me?

POINT II.— He has placed Himself in this state in order **to instruct me** in His capacity of Master; He teaches me what I should shrink from, and what I ought to follow. Poverty, humiliation, sufferings are the subject-matter of His lessons; that is what the manger, the stable and the severity of the season convey to us. The Divine Master says to us, as formerly to a prophet: *"Behold Me . . . and seekest thou great things?"* (JER. xlv. 5.) Look at what I am doing, and take shame at having profited so little by My lessons and by My example.

POINT III.— He has humbled Himself to this degree in order **to win my love** in His character as God. God is lovable everywhere; but He appears more so in the manger than elsewhere: He takes my nature and makes Himself my brother; He is a little child, but without the imperfections of that age; He is beautiful, winning, perfect; He is poor by choice, and, in this condition, He thinks of me, all He does is for me! Can I help loving Him? I ought to think of Him, speak of Him with fondness, gratify Him and never displease Him.

The Feast of St. Stephen.

Point I.— St. Stephen, proto-martyr of Jesus Christ, has convinced men of three truths, which are the most difficult to believe in the Christian religion, by making clear three things. He has shown that it is necessary **to believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ crucified.** He persuaded the Jews of this by His example, His miracles, His words. Let us thank God that we were born in this religion and brought up in this faith, which should be our happiness: *"This is life everlasting: that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent"* (St. John xvii. 3). Let us show by our reverence and faithfulness in keeping His holy law that we acknowledge Him as our God.

Point II.— St. Stephen has shown that it is possible **to love our enemies.** St. Stephen had his enemies also; he suffered from them as much as it is possible to suffer; he knew their hatred, yet he did not avenge himself nor grow angered; he loved them and prayed for them; he prayed kneeling, lifting up his voice; he asked for pardon, grace, mercy for them, and obtained it. After such example what excuse can we find for cherishing aversion, bitterness and enmity against our brethren on account of trifles?

Point III.—St. Stephen has shown it is possible **to die,** and that with joy, **for the sake of God.** His joy in dying was caused by the sight of paradise and of His Savior, Who was summoning him to his glory: *"I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God"* (ACTS vii. 55). In our troubles, afflictions, and sufferings, let us look heavenward; may our faith enable us to see what the eyes of St. Stephen saw: *"I see the heavens."* This thought will alleviate our sufferings.

Feast of St. John the Evangelist.

POINT I.—St. John was the **favorite disciple** of Jesus and deserved to be so. The choice which Our Lord made of him, the endearments, the communication of secrets and the signal gift He made to him of His Mother show that he possessed this favor. His purity, his attachment to Our Savior and the services which his Master foresaw he would render to Him show that he deserved it. Let us rejoice with this saint and beg him to use his credit to gain us entrance into the Heart of his Master: this is a greater blessing than the empire of the universe.

POINT II.—We may aspire to this particular **friendship with our Savior:** He will take us for His favorites if we wish it: *"If I wish it, I am already the friend of God"* (ST. AUGUSTINE). The great ones of the world would despise my friendship. Jesus will give me His with pleasure. Let us attach ourselves to Him without fearing repulse, or coldness, or inconstancy.

POINT III.—Four things will help us **to ob-**

tain this favor: purity of body and of soul; St. John was a virgin; the frequent use of the sacraments, represented by the repose of St. John on the bosom of his Master; constancy amid afflictions; St. John stood at the foot of the Cross of his dying Savior; tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin; St. John had the happiness of receiving her for his Mother. Let us use the like means to become the favorites of Jesus Christ.

Feast of the Holy Innocents.

POINT I.— Let us consider the **happiness of these holy children.** They are the first martyrs of Jesus Christ, the only ones who die for Jesus Christ newly-born; their blood and their death bear striking witness to Him. Without uttering a word, we can bear testimony in His favor by our modesty and by our holiness of life, if we be not fortunate enough to die for Him. *"You shall give testimony of Me"* (1 JOHN XV. 27).

POINT II.— The parents of these murdered children mourned their death; they were inconsolable, while those for whom they wept were supremely happy; death had forestalled their sorrows, their sins, possibly perdition. Let us **surrender ourselves to the providence of God**: He knows better than we what is for the best, and He will bring forth for us good from what we look upon as misfortune.

POINT III.—Let us consider the **ravages** which violent passion makes in a soul: ambition and the fear of losing a kingdom blinded Herod so greatly that he filled Judea with blood and slaughter; he did not even spare his own son. Let us fear the violence of our passions and keep them in subjection; let us entreat Our Lord to deliver us from their tyranny.

The End of the Year.

Point I.— **Our years pass away** one after the other, and soon all will have passed away. We shall find ourselves at the close of our life sooner than we think. Let us contemn everything which ceases with life and attach ourselves to God, for He alone does not pass away.

Point II.— **The good things** we have enjoyed during this year have passed away; the pleasures, the amusements and the comforts; everything is over: soon shall we remember them only as a dream. Let us be convinced that the possessions which pass away are sheer trifles and that only eternal blessings are worthy of our longing and eagerness.

Point III.— **The evils** we have suffered this year have passed away; the sorrows, mortifications, troubles. Let us learn to fear only those evils which endure for ever; let us crave forgiveness from God for having profited so little by our occasions of suffering.

ON THE BLESSINGS WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM GOD DURING THE YEAR.

POINT I.— God has **preserved our life**, that we might employ it for His service and our own salvation; have we done so? Let us tremble at the thought that we shall have to render account for all the moments of this life that we dispose of so badly.

POINT II.— God has given us innumerable kinds of **natural benefits**; health, strength, food, even pleasures, says the Scripture. God has been working for us: have we worked for Him?

POINT III.— God has given us a wonderful number of **supernatural benefits**; graces, inspirations, Sacraments, countless means of salvation. Let us thank God for them and ask His forgiveness for having profited by them so little.

ON OUR OMISSIONS DURING THE YEAR.

POINT I.— Let us consider our neglect **to sanctify ourselves.** Perhaps we are no better than we were last year; we are it may be less perfect: we ought to be ashamed at this and should be, had we studied a whole year without having learned anything, or practiced a trade without having made any progress in it.

POINT II.— Let us consider the **good** we have left **undone** and which we ought, according to our state of life, to have done: a great evil it is not to do the good which God asks of us.

POINT III.— Let us consider **the sins we have committed** this year, the thoughts, words and actions against God and against our neighbor: their number will alarm us, if their heinousness does not. Let us rouse ourselves to contrition.

POINT IV.— Let us consider **the sins we have caused** by our bad example and want of edification: we were burdened enough with our own faults, yet have added to them those of others. Let us ask pardon from God, with the firm purpose of avoiding these short-comings during the next year and of using it better than the present one.

The Circumcision.

POINT I.— On the eighth day of His life our Blessed Savior sheds His Blood; urged by a strong desire to suffer for us, **He begins as soon as He can to show that He loves us.** Let us tell Him that we have begun very late to love Him: *"Too late have I loved Thee"* (ST. AUGUSTINE). Let us at least begin with this year and may it be for evermore.

POINT II.— Our Savior, by taking the name of Jesus, **pledges Himself to shed His Blood for our salvation**, that is to say, to wash away our sins and obtain for us His favors. Let us foster a firm hope of salvation, since this Divine

Mediator chooses to use such powerful means for us.

POINT III.— Our Savior, by taking the holy name of Jesus, pledges **Himself to give us the means of salvation** when opportunity offers. He will do so when we ask Him by this holy name. Let us then say with confidence: Blessed is he who puts his hope in the name of the Savior and not in the deceitful favor of the world: "*Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord: and who hath not had regard to vanities and lying follies*" (PSALM xxxix. 5). Let us often say to Him devoutly: *Jesus, be to me Jesus, and save me.*

The Second Day of the Year.

ON THE NAME OF CHRISTIAN.

POINT I.— Jesus Christ has given us His name in order **to show us special love**, choosing us to be His servants, His soldiers, His followers and His children. What a glory for us! What an obligation to become like Him! The name of Christian is more glorious than that of prince or monarch: by our Christian life we must uphold its grandeur.

POINT II.— He has given us His name in order to **associate us with His designs**, which are to procure the glory of God and salvation of our souls. Let us never have any other object in our scheme of conduct, and let us take for our device those memorable words of the faithful of old: *I am a Christian; among us there is no sin committed.*

POINT III.— He has given us His name **to enlist us in the self-same works.** He has been foremost in humiliations, in labors and in sufferings. Shall we dare to draw back from following such a Leader? Shall we dare complain? The first Christians honored the name by shedding their blood when it was hated in the world; and now that it is glorious, we by our sensual and worldly life dishonor it. What cowardice! We must change either our name or our life: *Aut nomen aut mores muta.*

The Third Day of the Year.

POINT I.— God has granted us yet another year **to sanctify ourselves.** This perhaps will be the last year of our life: let us make use of it diligently, conformably with the will of God.

POINT II.— He has accorded it to us **to expiate our sins.** What would a lost soul do, had it a year at disposal to obtain pardon for its sins? What would a soul in purgatory do to expiate its faults?

POINT III.— He gives it to us **to obtain paradise.** We can each moment merit a new crown. Let us not lose time so precious.

The Fourth Day of the Year.

ON THE GOOD RESOLUTIONS WE SHOULD MAKE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR.

POINT I.— We should strive **to correct our vices.** Let us examine which is the one in us that displeases God the most and attack that one by the particular examination of conscience, by prayer and by the Sacraments.

POINT II.— We should **practice virtues.** Let us diligently cultivate the one which is the most needful to us and try to acquire it by the above means.

POINT III.— We should **fulfill our duties:** towards God, in our spiritual exercises; towards religion, by regularity; towards our neighbor, by charity and good offices. Let us beg Jesus Christ and His holy Mother for grace to fulfill all these duties.

The Fifth Day of the Year.

ON THE MYSTERY OF GOD BECOMING MAN FOR THE REDEMPTION OF MANKIND.

POINT I.— This mystery is indeed **glorious to God.** It shows the severity of His justice, that requires to be satisfied by such wondrous means. It displays His mercy, which has induced Him to give His only Son to deliver us from our sins. It manifests His infinite wisdom, which has found a way so efficacious that no created mind would ever have thought of it. Let us adore this wisdom, return thanks for this mercy and fear this justice.

Point II.—This mystery is **exceedingly profitable to us.** Our faith and hope are firmly grounded, as well as our love to God. Who can doubt what a God conversing with us has told us? Who will not hope for the salvation for which a God, in order to accomplish it, has effected such great and arduous things? Who will refrain from loving a God Who has shown His love for us by such convincing proofs? He has honored our nature by uniting it with His; He has vouchsafed us His blessings, His graces and His friendship; He has given Himself. What more could He do? Let us then stir up our faith anew and strengthen our hope; let us love a God Who has loved us with a love exceeding great and show Him by our behavior that we truly love Him.

The Epiphany.

On the Calling of the Magi.

Point I.— Let us consider the **miserable state of the Jews.** God abandons them and brings from afar non-believers, to whom He accords His light and His graces. When we render ourselves unworthy of God's graces, others turn them to account. Let us fear our own negligence and this mode of action on God's part.

Point II.— Let us consider the **happiness of**

the Magi, whom God by means so unusual calls unto Him. Let us thank God for having called us to the faith, to which He has not called a multitude of men who are abiding in unbelief.

Point III.— Let us consider the **faithfulness of the Magi** in obeying their call promptly, generously, perseveringly, until they found the great God Who was summoning them. Let us follow our vocation with the like promptitude, generosity and perseverance.

Monday.

On the Journey of the Magi.

Point I.— The Magi leave their dominions, their homes and their creature comforts, **to obey their call.** They undertake a long and painful journey. We should like to go to God, were the doing so to cost us neither labor nor sufferings. God deserved that, in order to find Him, we should pay the price of some suffering.

Point II.— They seek for Our Savior **wherever they hope to find Him**; they go even to the court of Herod without any fear. Let us learn to carry out our good purposes despite the fear of the world.

Point III.— They have the good fortune to arrive at the spot where **they find the infinite good** they are seeking. They reached it because they followed their star; they would never otherwise have found Our Savior. The grace of vocation is our star: if we follow it, we shall attain to happiness; we shall infallibly lose ourselves if we follow any other way.

Tuesday.

On the Virtues practiced by the Magi.

Point I.— Let us consider **their faith.** They recognized their God in a poor, forsaken child. Afterwards they preached His Birth and His Divinity and persevered in their faith unto death. We have greater reasons for believing than they had; let us revive our faith.

Point II.— Let us consider their tender and reverential **devotion.** They caress Our Savior, and are caressed by Him. They converse rapturously with the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. Let us imitate their devotion, since Our Savior gives Himself to us with even greater graciousness and tenderness.

Point III.— Let us ponder the **liberality** of their offerings. We should give Our Savior what we have vowed to Him. Let us renew the promises made to Him at our baptism and at our profession. Such offerings will be more acceptable to Him than those of the Magi.

Wednesday.

ON THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

POINT I.— It would seem weakness to fly from a violent prince who would fain kill our Blessed Savior without reason; yet Jesus does fly, though He might readily stem the rage of Herod. He would teach us to yield for a while and **suffer violence and injustice,** whenever Providence allows us to be grievously wronged and when might prevails over the good cause.

POINT II.— Many things **rendered this journey very trying.** They had to quit their own country, their relatives and their home, to wander into an idolatrous land, deprived of either comforts or sympathy, without even being aware of how long their exile might last. Enough for Our Savior was it that His Father had decreed it, to override every other consideration. Let us blame our ill-regulated eagerness, our useless anxieties, our exceeding precaution and our reasonings which, whenever God requires something from us, are so devoid of Christian spirit.

POINT III.— Our Savior on this occasion, as on all others of His life, **abandons Himself** entirely to the care of His Father. This is the best course we can adopt. Such complete abandonment to the guidance of Providence is honorable to God, to Whom we trust ourselves; to us who do not know how to guide ourselves it is advantageous; it is the well-spring of unchangeable peace: *"The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing"* (PSALM xxii. 1).

Thursday.

ON THREE CAUSES FOR JOY THE BLESSED VIRGIN HAD WHEN CARESSING JESUS WHILE YET A CHILD.

POINT I.— She was **enraptured with her Divine Child**, the most beautiful and most lovable that ever existed. She was aware that He possessed inner beauty far exceeding that of the body. All the treasures of grace and holiness were in Him as in their fountain-head, the infinite wisdom of God, the Divinity Itself. Jesus is her only Son, hers alone. He recognizes, touches, and caresses her, while He is at the same time being caressed by His beloved Mother. What joy for this blessed Mother! Let us take share in it and from her learn to behave with devotion and tenderness when our loving Savior holds intercourse with us, whether at meditation, Mass, or Holy Communion.

POINT II.— She **foresees with joy** that this little Child is the Savior of the world and the Redeemer of mankind, that He will establish peace with their God, that He will open the heaven which was closed to them, will fill it with the predestined ones and that He will be the object of adoration to all the nations of the earth. What joy for this Mother to have brought into the world such a Son! to have nursed and tended Him! Her joy will be perfect if we respond to the merciful intentions of her Son.

POINT III.— The Virgin knows that **her reward will be great.** All nations will call her "Blessed," will honor and invoke her. If heaven is for those who love God, and if it can be gained by a cup of water given to a poor person for the love of Him, what place will she occupy who gave birth to Him and who nursed Him? The caresses, the lights and the graces which she received while nursing her Son are part of her reward.

Friday.

ON THREE SOURCES OF AFFLICTION WHICH THE BLESSED VIRGIN HAD WHILE CARESSING THE SAVIOR AS A CHILD.

POINT I.— The first was the **spirit of prophecy** which she possessed in a very perfect degree. When she looked at the head, the face, the feet and the hands of her dear Son, she represented to herself how He would be some day crowned with thorns, stained with blood and pierced with nails. When she wrapped Him in swaddling-clothes and laid Him in the cradle, the various garments of shame with which He was to be covered, as also the heavy cross He would bear, presented themselves to her mind and weighed it down; she submitted to all this because she knew that it was necessary for our salvation. Let us thank her for her kindness and sympathize with her grief.

Point II.—The second source of affliction was the **knowledge of the Scripture,** of which she thoroughly understood the various meanings. The types which it contained, such as the brazen serpent and the paschal lamb, the histories which it relates of a persecuted David; of a Joseph who was sold, of an Isaac offered up and of a murdered Abel, taught her what would happen to her Son; oracles and prophecies told her the same thing. She saw that it was God Who required these sufferings and this death; she also would have it thus, that her will might be in conformity with God's will.

Point III.—The **sacrifices of the law** and those at which she was present were a third source of affliction. When she saw a lamb slain or a dove sacrificed, she knew that her Son would one day be offered up, and she felt beforehand a terrible sorrow. She accepted it with patience and resignation and with perfect submission. Let us imitate the generosity of our Holy Mother.

Saturday.

On the Gift of Faith.

Point I.—The gift of faith is a **purely gratuitous grace** which I did not deserve. What gratitude I owe to Thee, O my God, for such a precious grace, which Thou hast granted to me rather than to so many unbelievers who were not more unworthy of it than myself!

Point II.— God has **enlightened me** by the faith; but if, instead of applying myself to the service of God and to spiritual things, I am only attached to myself and to the things of the world, will not the gift of faith which I have received increase my guilt by the abuse which I have made of it?

Point III.— God has supplied me with the **means of corresponding** with the faith given, which is another proof of His goodness to me. How many Christians there are who have not the books, the teachings, the assistance of priests, the prayers, the sacrifices and the Sacraments in abundance as I have! So much unfaithfulness, with so many graces: should not this confound me and make me tremble?

First Sunday after Epiphany.

JESUS GOES TO THE TEMPLE AT THE AGE OF TWELVE YEARS.

Point I.— Our Savior teaches us what should be our **affection for the worship of God.** He went to the Temple and was present at the exercises of religion, that He might teach us to neglect nothing which concerns the service of God. We must adore Him, serve Him, pray to Him and make it our glory to be His worshipers and by our example lead others to glorify Him.

Point II.— With what **modesty and interior**

spirit was He present at the public sacrifice and prayers! With what attention, with what reverence and fervor did He speak to His Father! Let us imitate His virtues in public and private prayer.

POINT III.—He **took pleasure in being present** at the exercises of religion and quitted them reluctantly. To pay honor to God is the best thing we can do. Let us employ in His worship all the time which He requires not from us for other things. At least, let us never refuse Him the time He has set apart for our prayers and our devotions.

Monday.

OUR SAVIOR LEAVES HIS HOLY MOTHER AND ST. JOSEPH.

POINT I.—Our Savior **withdraws Himself** from us, as also His consolations and His lights, to punish us for our faults, try our patience and render our love more disinterested. When therefore God leaves us in sadness and desolation, let us profit by His good intentions.

POINT II.—The Virgin **seeks her Son** sorrowing: so should we seek God when we have lost Him. She does not find Him among her relatives and friends; nor is it in the company of our own we shall find consolation in our troubles: we shall find it in the place of prayer and at the foot of the altar, as Our Lady found her Son in the Temple.

Point III.— Mary, having found her Son, complained to Him of the trouble His absence had caused her. Our Savior, by His reply, teaches us that we must **never omit what God requires** from us and must, to execute His orders, put aside all worldly considerations: *"I must be about My Father's business"* (St. Luke ii. 49). Let this short saying be engraved on our mind and heart; it will enable us to avoid many faults and perform many good deeds.

Tuesday.

On the Humility of the Learned.

"The parents of Jesus Christ found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions" (St. Luke ii. 46).

Point I.—*"Sitting in the midst of the Doctors."* This Child is the Eternal Wisdom. All light and knowledge come from Him, yet He remains seated humbly in the midst of the doctors. After having adored Him, let us **wonder at such deep humility** and examine whether our learning inspires us with pride and whether, even in society and in the exercise of our functions, we carry not about us an air of self-sufficiency displeasing to everyone. Humility is the most fitting background to erudition.

Point II.— Jesus Christ **listens to the doctors: hearing them.** If we already know what is being said, yet should we listen attentively; such condescension will edify those who are speaking: the contrary would create annoyance.

Point III.— Jesus Christ **listens to the doctors: . . . asking them questions.** So great is our vanity and our knowledge so little, that we perceive not how many things we are ignorant of. The knowledge of scholars surpasses but little that of the generality of the learned, and the knowledge of the learned is but little above that of the common run of men. If great acquirements are admired, it is because they are rare and of a kind to which few people have either time or inclination to apply themselves. The learning which is highest in the eyes of the world is often that which is least useful. Perhaps we are ignorant of what it concerns us most to know. Let us be fond of taking advice; we might thereby avoid many a fault.

Wednesday.

The Teaching of Jesus Christ is most valuable.

"*All that heard Him (Jesus Christ) were astonished*" (St. Luke ii. 47).

Point I.— **In its mysteries.** These mysteries are beyond our reason, but do not clash with it as do those of paganism; they are all mysteries of love, the contemplation whereof moves the heart. They are: Three Persons in one Divinity; but all Three occupied with our welfare. A God made like unto us in all things; but Who raises us from our mean estate and heals our miseries. This God-Man dying on a Cross; so that He may close hell to us and open heaven. Let us marvel at these mysteries and love them ever more and more.

POINT II.—**In its precepts.** They all relate to the love of God, of our fellow-creatures and of ourselves. They are simply the natural law, or the means of fulfilling it more easily. The pure morality of the Gospel delighted the pagans and strengthened the early Christians to encounter martyrdom. "How beautiful is the morality of the Christians!" exclaimed the pagans. "Let us die for our holy faith," cried out the martyrs. Let us at least say: "We love our holy law and mean to obey it."

POINT III.—**In its counsels.** Even unbelievers admire them. Could we not practice some of them? Let us cherish the wish so to do and beg this wish from God. It is when Jesus Christ speaks to us inwardly that His teaching is above all admirable. It enlightens, fortifies and comforts us. Let us often say to Jesus Christ, *"Speak, Lord,"* and let us lend ear to Him.

Thursday.

ON SPIRITUAL PERPLEXITIES.

"*The parents of Jesus Christ understood not the word that He spoke unto them*" (ST. LUKE ii. 50).

POINT I.— We must not **bring them upon ourselves.** It would be the greatest misfortune to us if our spiritual darkness proceeded from our neglect in instructing ourselves, from wilful inattention of mind, or from our unsubdued passions. This would amount to sheer blindness. May not our difficulties have this fatal origin? Let us pray to God to show us the cause thereof and often reflect on our inward state.

POINT II.— **They should not discourage us.** Should they arise from ignorance, from inattention, or from our passions, we have the remedy; should they come from God, why need we be out of heart? Let us adore this disposition of Providence in our regard; such has been the way of God in dealing with the saints: do we deserve any other?

POINT III.— They should, however, **keep us humble** and free from presumption. What is more calculated to inspire such feelings? Let these, however, be always tempered with confidence. God allows our mental troubles, because He loves to see us humble and fearful; and He wishes that, free from all confidence in ourselves we should place trust in Him alone. Let our hearts be right with God; let us, as much as in us lies, do what pleases Him and repose in peace on His merciful heart: *"In peace in the selfsame I will sleep and I will rest"* (PSALM iv. 9).

Friday.

ON OUR LORD'S LIFE AT NAZARETH.

POINT I.— Let us fix our gaze upon **the Holy Family,** comprising Jesus, Mary and Joseph; admire the peace, union and devotion which reigned within it and act in such wise that the like virtues may be found wherever we happen to be.

POINT II.— Jesus possessed the power of working miracles, of preaching and of making Himself reverenced by every one; yet, for our instruction, He avoided such reputation and **chose a hidden life.** In this retreat he obeyed Mary and Joseph with exactitude and subjected Himself to their guidance. After having pondered with wonder whom the God obeys and in what He obeys, we shall have no difficulty in submitting to what He requires from us through those placed in His stead to guide us.

POINT III.—*"Jesus advanced* **in wisdom and age and grace** *with God and men:"* that is, He gave signs of greater wisdom in proportion as He advanced in age. Let us take shame because we, who can and ought to increase in virtue and holiness, advance so little; and let us be still more ashamed, because, after so many years, we have less charity, patience, humility and mortification than we had formerly. If we would have our virtue resemble that of Our Savior, it must be sincere *"before God,"* and it must be edifying *"before men."*

Saturday.

ON THE HIDDEN LIFE.

POINT I.— A hidden life is that in which a **holy life is lived most easily,** in humility, watchfulness over self, union with God and all interior virtues. Thank God if He has called you to such hidden life, and examine how you use it for your spiritual progress.

POINT II.— A hidden life is that which **presents fewest dangers** to salvation. One is withdrawn from the temptations that spring from pride and the fear of the world. One is freed from the sins of omission that they commit who hold public and official positions, sins so difficult to avoid, and from numberless temptations which those only are aware of who know them by experience. Compassionate those who are exposed to such manifold dangers and never envy their lot.

POINT III.—Should, however, God call you to **public life,** as He called Jesus Christ towards the close of His mortal career, submit to this disposal of Providence. Remember only that the higher your office the more should you humble yourself in all things; that it is not the splendor of your functions which will sanctify you, but the purity of intention and the earnestness wherewith you discharge your duties. You should fear further lest the wiles of self-love may destroy your merit.

The Second Sunday after Epiphany.

THE MARRIAGE IN CANA.

POINT I.— This newly married couple were blessed in having invited Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother to their nuptial feast. Through them were they spared the confusion in which they would have been plunged. Let us **pray for the help of Our Savior and of His Holy Mother** in our undertakings, and all will go well with us. To rouse our confidence, let us bear in mind that the Blessed Virgin takes an interest in her friends, without even being asked to do so, and that her Son grants her everything she asks for.

POINT II.— **The wine failed** in the middle of the feast: *"They have no wine"* (ST. JOHN ii. 3). No pleasure is ever complete in this world, and we often find sorrow where we hoped to find gratification. Everything deceives in this world, and if we place our confidence in it, we shall be betrayed. It is a reed which breaks;

if we lean on it, it will wound us and bring us to earth; *"it is broken and kills."*

POINT III.—*"Thou hast kept the good wine until now."* These words of the chief steward of the feast teach us what is **God's mode of dealing with the virtuous.** He allows them to suffer, but at length He brings them comfort. He leaves them in affliction during life, that He may cause them to die in the peace which is a foretaste of the happiness of eternity. Let us wonder at such fatherly goodness and submit ourselves to His guidance.

Monday.

ON THE THREE UNIONS GOD DESIRES TO HAVE WITH US.

POINT I.—The first union has been accomplished **in the Incarnation.** He took our nature, making Himself man, and He has made us sharers in His Divinity: *"Partakers of the Divine nature,"* says St. Peter (2 ST. PETER i. 4). What an honor for us to be raised to share the Divine Being by such union! Let us do nothing unworthy of our royal rank.

POINT II.—The second union takes place by means of **Sanctifying Grace,** which unites us with God in a special manner and makes us children of God, His friends and inheritors of His everlasting kingdom. It is our title to true greatness. Never let us surrender this, but rather lose everything than suffer it to be taken from us.

POINT III.—The third union takes place by means of the **Holy Eucharist.** This Divine Food not only unites us with God, but changes us into Him: *"Thou shalt be changed into Me."* It is no longer we who live, it is Jesus Christ Who lives in us. Let us examine if our thoughts, wishes and whole life be worthy of this Divine Savior, Who so often unites Himself with us.

Tuesday.

ON THREE MEANS OF UNITING OURSELVES WITH GOD.

POINT I.—The first means is **faith**: *"I will espouse thee to Me in faith"* (OSEE ii. 20). It unites us with the Savior, as a member with its head, as a vine-branch with the vine. It makes us live with a life which is quite divine, which is that of the just; it guides us by supernatural principles; it makes us wish for the good things of eternity, which are unseen. Let us act by these principles of faith and thank God for having given them to us.

POINT II.—The second means is **love**, which unites us with God and binds Him to unite Himself to us. He assures us of this Himself: "I will fix My dwelling in him; My eyes, My heart and My spirit, shall all be his." Let us unite ourselves to God by love; let us begin to do on earth what we shall do for ever in heaven. Let us love God, Who is so infinitely deserving of being loved, and Who loves us tenderly.

POINT III.— The third means is **conformity to the Will of God.** To wish what God wishes and not to desire anything else means perfect union with Him. This union is the source of perfect peace of mind, extraordinary merit and beatitude already begun.

Wednesday.

ON THREE OTHER MEANS OF UNITING OURSELVES WITH GOD.

POINT I.— **Detachment from creatures.** Attachment implies strong union; hence it is impossible that a heart which is attached to creatures should be united with God. It necessarily thinks of creatures, is occupied with them, loves them; and God is as far from it as it is far from God. If we have so much difficulty in uniting ourselves with God, let us admit that our attachment to the things of earth, to our ease and to our comforts, is the main cause.

POINT II.— **Habitual recollection.** A distracted mind renders the heart unstable. How can such a heart be fixed on God? Let us bewail our habitual distractedness, humbling ourselves because so great a Being as God does not constantly possess our mind and our heart; and let us aim at dwelling in recollection.

POINT III.— **Frequent ejaculatory prayers.** They suppose a mind habitually taken up with God; they lead the heart to God and end by uniting it with this center of its repose. It is by means of suchlike prayers that the saints have arrived at closest union with God, and through them has it been maintained. Let us employ so easy a means of uniting ourselves with our good Father; let us often say: "*Who is like God?*" "*My God and My all!*" "*God alone!*" "*O most holy Trinity!*" The greatest consolations flow out of this practice.

Thursday.*

ON THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH GOD AND THE WORLD TREAT THEIR SERVANTS.

"*Every man at first setteth forth good wine*" (ST. JOHN ii. 10).

POINT I.— The beginning of the **service of the world is pleasant.** Joy, pleasures and great hopes attend it: at first it "*setteth forth good wine.*" Soon, however, everything changes: hopes vanish, troubles succeed to pleasures and sadness takes the place of amusements: "*Then that which is worse.*" Let us hold in pity the slaves of the world, and be amazed at their blindness, which the experience of all ages, past and present, cannot cure.

POINT II.— The **service of God seems hard** and has indeed its troubles at the outset. We must subdue our passions, trample under foot human respect, bind ourselves to the exact fulfillment of our duties, watch incessantly over ourselves and persistently mortify ourselves in all things: this is burdensome to us. However, besides the consolations which quickly sweeten these labors, when the habit of virtue is once formed, the mildness of the yoke of Jesus Christ and the lightness of His burden are experienced forthwith. Deep peace gives its joy, as well as the testimony of a good conscience and the esteem of the good. *"Thou hast kept the good wine until now."*

POINT III.— Finally, **at death,** there remains to the vassals of the world nothing but a **terrible void** and a multitude of sins, while the servants of God go to Him adorned with virtues and abundant merits. To which class of servants would you prefer to belong? Can you hesitate? Say then: *"Let us serve the Lord."*

Friday.*

JESUS BEGINS HIS MIRACLES.— JESUS CHRIST PERFORMS HIS FIRST MIRACLE AT REQUEST OF HIS MOTHER.

ON THE INTERCESSION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

POINT I.— The intercession of Mary **forestalls our request.** Mary did not wait until these poor folk, to whom wine was lacking, informed her of their trouble. She saw them in a difficulty, and that sufficed to make her intercede for them. How often has this good Mother interceded for us when we have not even asked her to do so! We have everything through her, says St. Bernard. She often anticipates our wants, since we receive many graces which we did not ask for. Let us thank this good Mother; perhaps it is to her unlooked-for intercession that we owe our conversion.

POINT II.—The intercession of Mary is **all-powerful:** *omnipotentia supplex.* The hour for Jesus Christ to show Himself to the world by wonders was not yet come: *"My hour has not yet come"* (ST. JOHN ii. 4). He seemed even to refuse the request of His Mother, as contrary to the disposition of His Father: nevertheless He does grant it. Let us invoke Mary with a complete confidence and have recourse to her in our troubles. Let us bear ever in mind the past; it will establish us in unwavering confidence.

POINT III.—The intercession of Mary is **prudent.** Mary cannot favor our heedlessness. We must on our part be active in the business of our salvation, by doing what Jesus Christ enjoins: *"Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye."* We must show we are her children by our love for her Son, if we would have her show herself our Mother.

Saturday.

IT IS EASIER FOR US THAN FOR THE APOSTLES TO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST.

"The Disciples of Jesus Christ believed in Him."

POINT I.— Our faith in Jesus Christ **has fewer obstacles** to overcome than that of the Apostles. The faith of the Apostles had to conquer the prejudices of their nation, which, from the prophecies misunderstood, was looking for a temporal deliverer. It had to overcome the example of the synagogue, which rejected Jesus Christ; the son of an artisan called himself the Son of God, and a poor man gave himself out as the Master of the world. What hindrances to the faith of the Apostles! Yet they said to Jesus Christ: *"Increase our faith"* (ST. LUKE xvii. 5). All such hindrances are kept aloof from us. The seeming contradictions of the prophecies have been reconciled. We believe as the Church and all the great men she has produced believe. Lastly, the authors of the writings of the New Testament show us the greatness of Jesus Christ in His apparent lowliness.

POINT II.— Our faith in Jesus Christ has **ampler grounds** than that of the Apostles. These new grounds are a complete fulfillment of the prophecies, and in particular those of Jesus Christ, the establishment of Christianity, the prodigious number of martyrs and the constant succession of miracles in the Church. Let us not be satisfied with saying to Jesus Christ: "*Increase our faith;*" but let us say to Him unhesitatingly with a strong feeling of love: "*Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God*" (St. Matt. xvi. 16).

Point III.— We have been **brought up in the faith** of Jesus Christ. We believe without difficulty when we have believed always and when the faith received in Baptism has formed part of our earliest teaching. Think what it costs some non-believers to have faith in Jesus Christ, and thank God that He has caused you to be born of Christian parents.

Third Sunday after Epiphany.

The Healing of the Leper.

Point I.— The leper **knows all** the particulars of **his disease,** its repulsiveness, shame and peril. He is truly desirous of being healed. He applies with confidence and humble-mindedness to Our Savior and entreats earnestly for his cure. If we are conscious of our spiritual diseases, sincerely desire to be delivered from them and ask to be cured with like humility and trust, we shall obtain our request.

Point II.— Our Savior is **touched with compassion,** and with His wonted charity He gives health to the leper. He touches him with His hand and grants him perfect health. The compassion, charity and power of Jesus should strengthen our confidence; but we should stand in awe, because, though Our Lord so often comes to us and enters into us, we are still not healed. We run counter to Him; we wish not to be cured.

Point III.—Our Savior enjoins the leper to **keep silence** as to his miraculous cure. He would teach us thereby not to seek in our actions the esteem or vain applause of men. Let us not lose the fruit of our labors for so contemptible a reward. Let holy intentions incite us, and let us rest satisfied that God alone should esteem and approve our works.

Monday.*

LEPROSY A TYPE OF SIN.

Point I.—**In its origin.** Leprosy is caused by corruption of the blood, and it is from the corruption of nature by original sin that all our actual sins proceed. Let us grieve over this general corruption of our being and make profit of it as the most powerful remedy against pride.

Point II.—**In its effects.** Leprosy disfigures the body horribly; sin also disfigures our soul and renders it so hideous that, were we allowed to behold it, we could not bear the sight. Leprosy involved seclusion from the society of other men; and, in some sense, mortal sin does this also. If, in a state of mortal sin, a person is still united with the faithful by several ties, the chief one at least is broken, namely, that of charity, since such an one is only a dead member of the body of Jesus Christ. Let us fear these effects of mortal sin, and, if we have reason to hope that its stain is no longer within us, let us not fail to implore God to purify us more and more: "*Wash me yet more*" (PSALM l. 4).

POINT III.— **In its cure.** Lepers were reputed cured only after the sentence of the priests. In like manner, however great may be the contrition of a sinner, he must always receive from the priest the great boon of absolution. God only forgives on this condition. But the healing of sin has this excellence above that of leprosy, that absolution effects it, whereas the priests of the old law only declared and published it. Let us thank God for having instituted the Sacrament of Penance.

Tuesday.

THE CENTURION'S SERVANT.

POINT I.— This officer loved his servant, felt for his illness, sought the remedy and relieved him. This is our Savior's **first cause for admiration**; he knew that masters and great personages are insensible to the miseries of their servants and dependants. We should imitate the charity of this centurion, feel for the misfortunes of our brethren and try to relieve them: such solicitude will attract Our Savior and obtain His graces for us.

POINT II.— **The second cause for admiration** is to witness such piety and faith in a man brought up in the tumult of war, where licentiousness and impiety are found generally to prevail. He employed his wealth in making God honored; he had built a synagogue that God's praises might be sung and His faith preached. He had a lively faith. The faith and piety of this stranger will one day put to shame the many Christians who profess so little of either. Let it not bring confusion upon us.

POINT III.— **The third cause for admiration** is to behold a great person of the world humbling himself, not daring to appear before his Savior, esteeming himself unworthy that Jesus should enter his house, prostrating himself before Him and adoring Him. Let us have similar feelings of humility, especially when we repeat the words of this officer: *"Lord, I am not worthy"* (ST. MATT. viii. 8).

Wednesday.

THE PALSY ANOTHER TYPE OF SIN.

"My servant lieth at home sick of the Palsy" (ST. MATT. viii. 6).

POINT I.— A paralytic **can do no work.** Mortal sin deprives its victim of power to work for God and to perform any supernatural action. The feeble victories which the soul in sin still gains over its passions, the prayers it recites and its acts of charity are all lifeless works, which the severest penance cannot quicken into activity. Let us sorrow over the blindness of so many souls who take quietly these great losses, and, if we have reason to fear that our soul is in such state of spiritual paralysis, let us say with fervor, as did the centurion, "Lord, my soul is sick of the palsy; *but only say the word and it shall be healed." "My servant lieth at home sick of the palsy and is grievously tormented."*

Point II.— A paralytic has constant **need of others' help.** It is only by aid of grace that we can entreat God for the cure of our spiritual paralysis. Often, however, our prayers will not suffice, if the Church and charitable souls come not to our aid. Let us therefore have recourse to the prayers of others, and especially to those of the Church, our good Mother, who weeps over us whenever we fall into mortal sin. Above all, let us have recourse to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Point III.— A paralytic who has been cured **is liable to a relapse.** Often, indeed, a first attack is but the prelude to a second, from which a person may never recover. Some root of disease always remains, even after what seems to be the most complete cure. We ought to use the greatest precautions after our conversion to subdue our evil inclinations. Rarely do people rise again after very frequent relapses into mortal sin.

Thursday.

"Many shall come from the east and the west" (St. Matt. viii. 2).

Point I.—The Jews are the **first among nations to have proved the truth of this prophecy**: they lost faith and religion alike, and the Gentiles have taken their place. Since the Jews, how many Christians have been perverted! How many holy men have lost their sanctity! How many Religious have abandoned their fervor and even their vocation! How many heretics have at the same time joined the Church, how many sinners have been converted, how many seculars have turned their backs upon the world and become truly fervent! Let us wonder at the mysterious ways of Providence and be in distrust of ourselves.

Point II.—God manifests (1) His **justice** by punishing the ingratitude, crimes, negligence and presumption of those whom He rejects; (2) His **mercy** towards those whom He chooses by His grace and whom He puts in the place of the others; (3) His **wisdom** in supplying all losses and in filling up the number of those who are to reign with Him. Let us fear lest our faults should oblige this strict justice to deprive us of the favors God's mercy has bestowed on us and lest others should be enriched at our expense, profiting by the graces we neglect, and should obtain the crown which was destined for us: *"that no man take thy crown"* (Apoc. iii. 2). What unhappiness would be ours!

Friday.

On Sincerity in Confession.

"Show thyself to the priest" (St. Matt. viii. 4).

Point I.— Confessions should be **sincere in the declaration of sin.** We must state the kind and the number as well as the circumstances which change the nature of our sin, should these so add to its malice as to do this, otherwise we should not be *"showing ourselves to the priests."* Have we always used such sincerity in confession? Have we not at times made our self-examination very carelessly? How can we make known what we are, when we ourselves know it not?

Point II.— The confession should be **sincere in the manifestation of the heart.** From the heart all sins proceed; yet it does not follow that, because the sins are revealed, the heart also is shown. There is often in the heart a propensity of far different strength from what the sins betoken. We run risk of making confessions which are of little avail if we declare not our evil propensities in all their malignity. Does our confessor know us thoroughly?

Point III.— The confession should be **sincere in its contrition.** The slightness of the change we observe in ourselves after our confessions and the constant absence of the spirit of penance should cause us to fear that our contrition is superficial and deceptive. This deserves at least serious examination. Let us go through it now. A holy priest said on his death-bed that his greatest fear was that he had not had due contrition in his confessions. Let us always take care to rouse ourselves to true sorrow.

Saturday.

ON THE HELL OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SPECIALLY FAVORED.

"*The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness*" (St. Matt. viii. 12).

Point I.— They who have been specially favored will feel more keenly the **loss of God.** This will proceed from the remembrance of the particular love which God showed them and which will render Him evermore an object deserving of their love. The rapturous sense of gratitude will be always striving to enter their heart, yet will be repelled always by that of reprobation. Let us imagine, as well as may be, this heart-rending torment and not run risk of experiencing it. Let us love now the God Who loves us so greatly.

POINT II.— Souls favored with special grace will feel more cruelly the **gnawing worm.** They will remember the good disposition God had given them, the yearning for virtue wherewith He had favored them, the inspirations, remorse of conscience and other numberless graces He had lavished on them. Their spite and rage will hence be beyond imagination.

POINT III.— Souls thus favored will feel more powerfully the **torment of the fire.** The kindness which was by them made naught of, now is changed into wrath. Souls which have received special graces in this world must expect, if they are lost, to suffer in the other all the fierceness of the anger of God, all the burning agony of the fire which will prey on them and all the rage of devils. Let us sorely dread so heavy a penalty. The special favors we have received and are receiving every day, and the small profit that we derive from them should afford us ample reason to fear.

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

ON THE TEMPESTS OF THE SOUL.

"*Jesus having entered into a boat, His disciples followed Him, and behold a great tempest arose in the sea*" (ST. MATT. viii. 23).

POINT I.— The storm by which the boat of the Apostles was tossed and all the storms taking place at sea are but a feeble image of those which men encounter in their passage through this mortal life. The former are momentary only, nay often mere squalls. Those **of the soul,** on the contrary, **are continual,** and often real tempests. No perfect calm can we look for either in youth or old age, either by day or by night. Frequently is the vessel shattered, and but a single plank of it remains whereon to reach the harbor. Who will not tremble at thought of such constant peril?

POINT II.— The storm occurring at sea only endangers fortune, or at most life; those, on the contrary, which the soul experiences **expose to perdition.** Let us ponder the terrible consequence of spiritual shipwreck and fear it ever more and more.

POINT III.— **Storms at sea are always visible,** and through the fear they inspire we are led to use prompt measures to avoid being engulfed by them. **Tempests of the soul,** on the contrary, are **often invisible,** and any one may at unawares perish by them. He may be already in the depth of the sea, whilst believing that he is yet sailing on towards the harbor. Let us then watch and pray always: apparent calm is more full of peril than the tempest raging most furiously.

Monday.

ON THE CAUSES OF THE INVISIBLE TEMPESTS OF SOULS.

POINT I.— The first cause is a **wrong choice of a state of life.** In such case we neither possess the graces of the state to which God had called us, nor do we possess those of the state we have embraced. There is one only way of saving ourselves from shipwreck, and that is penance; but we never consider we have entangled ourselves by going contrary to the will of God and life passes amid tempests and daily shipwrecks which we are not conscious of. Are we in the state of life to which God has called us? How did we choose it?

POINT II.— The second cause of invisible storms is **neglected passions**; above all, spiritual passions, pride, avarice, envy. These passions disturb the soul and lead it on to the abyss without its being aware. Every one else recognizes the tempest and the wrecks; the unhappy being who is agitated by his passions is the only one who does not perceive them. Let us seriously examine whether we are not victims of some secret passion.

POINT III.— The third cause of the invisible tempests of souls are **the maxims and customs of the world.** We insensibly adopt these maxims, and drift calmly down the tide of custom. We think that we are running no risk, while we see others living heedlessly. Do not the maxims and customs of the world shape our rule of conduct?

Tuesday.

ON THE GENERAL MEANS OF ESCAPING FROM SPIRITUAL TEMPESTS.

POINT I.— First: **Not to expose ourselves to them** without Jesus Christ. The Apostles embarked with Jesus Christ: "*And when he entered into the boat, His disciples followed Him;*" yet they encountered a violent tempest. What might have happened had they embarked of their own accord? We are upheld in danger by grace alone, and God does not give it to those who expose themselves to peril. Let us never undertake anything, nor expose ourselves to any temptation, unless it be the will of God. If we examine our failures, we shall see that most of them result from sheer rashness.

POINT II.— Secondly: **to awake Jesus Christ.** We awake Jesus Christ when we revive our faith, especially in the great truths of the four Last Things. Remembrance of them is an effectual means for preserving us from sin: "*Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin*" (ECCLUS. vii. 40). But, that these great truths may be beneficial in time of temptation, we must meditate on them often, and engrave them on our minds. No longer will there be time to search into them when temptations have come upon us and are more powerful than the tardy remedy. The Apostles would have been lost, had they, when the storm arose, to seek for Jesus Christ.

POINT III.—Thirdly: **to call Jesus Christ to our aid.** He must himself calm the storm. Let us say to Him fervently and confidently amid our temptations: *"Lord, save us, we perish"* (ST. MATT. viii. 25).

Wednesday.

THE APOSTLES, SEEING THE BOAT TOSSED BY A VIOLENT STORM, WERE AFRAID OF PERISHING.

POINT I.—God allows the good to be disturbed by the violence of their passions, or by temptations coming from without. He permits this that they may **fear** and be delivered from the **vain confidence** they might have in their own strength and virtue. *"There is no certain safety while the ocean is around us."*

POINT II.—He permits it in order to **excite us to fervor.** When we fear nothing, we live on thoughtlessly; when we are in danger, we strive to escape from it, and the very effort places us in safety. A peace that has lasted too long has ruined many a one.

POINT III.—He permits it in order to **draw us to Himself.** *"Lord, save us, we perish"* (ST. MATT. viii. 25), cried out the Apostles when in danger. When we are afraid, we have recourse to God, pray to Him earnestly, go to Him confidently, cling to His Cross, hide ourselves in His Wounds; and this is what He wants us to do. Happy the tribulation which compels us to have recourse to God! Let us beseech God to give us this salutary fear and to help us to overcome, through such fear, by His grace and His holy love, all obstacles in the way of our salvation.

Thursday.

ON THREE MOTIVES WHY THE GOOD SHOULD FEAR.

POINT I.— Holy people have reason to fear **from without.** The devil, the world, all creatures in fine, seem to have conspired to bring about our ruin. Example is harmful, opportunities for doing evil are many. How many persons, after having for a long time practiced virtue, have lapsed into sin and are lost! There is no age, nor state, nor beginning of holiness that safeguards us from such enemies. Who will not be afraid?

POINT II.— The good have reason to fear **from within.** We have no enemy more to be dreaded than ourselves. Corrupt nature, inclination to evil, the passions and confirmed habits, are the greatest hindrances to our salvation. How many are there who have continued fervent for some time, yet have lost their fervor out of the fickleness inherent in us.

POINT III.— The holy have cause for fear

on the part of God. All our good works notwithstanding, He may not vouchsafe the grace of perseverance, which we cannot merit. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and, with fear united to confidence in His mercy, surrender ourselves wholly for time and eternity to His providence.

Friday.

ON PERSECUTIONS

"*Lord, save us, we perish*" (ST. MATT. viii. 25).

POINT I.—Our Blessed Savior has the like **solicitude for us** as for His Church, which has endured dreadful persecutions: "for it is everywhere opposed," reported the old pagan. God permits this, to punish us for our backslidings and our negligence, to detach us from the world and teach us that we must be treated even as He was, since we are His disciples: "*If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you*" (ST. JOHN xv. 26). Let us adore this Divine Providence, correct the faults which draw down such punishment and bear the penalty with patience.

POINT II.—Jesus allows persecutions to **prove our virtue** and to make it manifest. He seems to slumber and not to take heed of us, but He will awake at the time He has appointed; He will still the waves and restore calm. Let us remember the violent storms we have encountered; God scattered them when it proved to our advantage. His arm is not less strong now, nor has His goodness become less great. Let us hope everything from Him, and if He protects us, let us be sure that all will work together for our good.

POINT III.— The Apostles abandoned not their ship to the mercy of the waves; they used every effort to save it from destruction, and one and all **turned confidently to their Master.** This is what God would have us do during stress and storm. He would have us not lose courage, but act with vigor and humble-mindedness; be more than ever united in fraternal charity, and pray trustingly for the necessary help: *"Lord, save us, we perish."*

Saturday.

ON THE REASONS FOR HAVING CONFIDENCE IN JESUS CHRIST.

"Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith" (ST. MATT. viii. 26).

POINT I.— **His goodness.** His Incarnation, His life, which was only a succession of benefits —*"Who went about doing good"* (ACTS x. 38), — His death, His Sacraments, etc., are effects of inconceivable goodness. But we shall feel such goodness still more, if we consider that it had as object not only the human race in general, but each one of us in particular.

"He loved me, and gave Himself up for me," said St. Paul.

Point II.—**His power.** It is infinite. It is by Jesus Christ that everything was made, and He rules everything with absolute dominion. *"What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey Him?"* What can we fear under rule of a Master so good and powerful? Let us reflect amid temptations that He addresses us as He did the Apostles: *"Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?"*

Point III.—**His merits.** As God, Jesus Christ already possesses all power, but, as the God made Man, He has in addition merited for us all graces necessary for our salvation and for the forgiveness of our sins. He assures us, moreover, that everything we ask the Father in His Name will be given us. Why, then, are we out of heart at sight of our misery and weakness, in the midst of our temptations, and after our falls? *"Why are you fearful?"* Only let us cast ourselves into His arms trustfully. He will never let us perish.

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SEED AND THE COCKLE.

Point I.—The **good seed** is **faith,** which discloses to us the precious things of the future life, the greatness of God and the eternal truths. Let us thank God for having vouchsafed us this great blessing, which He has withheld from so many. Let us examine our life to see whether it be conformable to our faith. It avails nothing to believe as a Christian if one leads the life of a heathen.

POINT II.—The **good seed** represents the **graces God gives us,** the supernatural lights illuminating us, the holy feelings animating us. These foundations of our salvation cost the Blood of a God. Let us profit by them, lest we misuse His goodness and provoke His wrath.

POINT III.—The **good seed** is the **Holy Eucharist.** What fruit has it not produced in the saints! What fruit is it not capable of producing in us! Let us examine how it is we receive it so often, yet that it produces so little fruit. Let us ask our Divine Savior to-day to remove from us the hindrances which prevent it from bringing about the intended results.

Monday.

"*While men were asleep, his enemy came, and oversowed cockle among the wheat*" (ST. MATT. xiii. 25).

POINT I.—This enemy is **the devil,** who by temptation and doubts strives to weaken and extinguish our faith. Let us renounce everything contrary to faith, let us quicken it anew and beg God to increase it; *"I do believe, Lord, help my unbelief"* (St. Mark ix. 23).

Point II.— This enemy is **the world**, which by its wicked maxims runs counter to those of Jesus Christ. It incites to all that Jesus Christ condemns. One or other must be mistaken. This Our Savior cannot be, He is God; hence must the world be in error. Let us not be deceived by it, let us renounce its maxims and submit ourselves as of yore to those of our Blessed Savior.

Point III.— **Wicked people** are this enemy, who lead us by their bad example into evil. The bad seed of example is the dangerous cockle; it has surprising power to make us fail in duty and commit great faults. We should gather strength for ourselves from the fear and love of God and hold bad example, come whence it may, as an object of horror to fly from, rather than as a model to imitate.

Tuesday.

GOD BEARS WITH SINNERS.

"Suffer both to grow until the harvest" (St. Matt. xiii. 30).

Point I.— God bears with sinners **to show His patience.** God is offended, every moment and in all places, in every way and by all kinds of people. He might avenge Himself and destroy utterly those who offend Him; yet He does not so; on the contrary He loads them oftentimes with blessings. Let us wonder at His patience and not add to the number of those who cause Him to exercise it. Let us take shame from our impatience; a passing word or mere trifle throws us out of temper.

POINT II.— God bears with sinners, **to show His goodness.** He does them good, seeks for them, shows them favors, patiently awaits them, spares no pains to win them, is not repelled. Who would not be won by such goodness? Who would still dare to offend Him? *"How most cruel it is to offend such a Father!"* (ST. BONAVENTURE).

POINT III.— God bears with sinners, **to show His justice.** The little good they do He rewards by temporal prosperity. When He leaves them to their own devices, they grow hardened and rush into everlasting misery. His not punishing them is a consequence of His great anger. Let us compassionate sinners who in this life are fortunate; let us be afraid of such happiness and ask the great God to punish us in this world if we sin, that we may not be punished everlastingly: *"Here burn, here cut, so long as Thou sparest me in eternity"* (ST. AUGUSTINE).

Wednesday.

ON THE WATCHFULNESS OF SUPERIORS WITH REGARD TO THEIR SUBORDINATES.

"*While men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat*"
(ST. MATT. xiii. 25).

POINT. I.— This watchfulness is **necessary.** without it superiors would not be aware of the needs of their subordinates so as to be ready to meet them, nor of their falls so as to have power to remedy them. The leading duty of a superior is hence to watch; if he watch not, all the failings of his subordinates which he might have forestalled will be imputed to him. How the office of superior should be dreaded! The seeming advantages it procures are paid dearly for if he fulfills his whole duty, and still more dearly if he fails to fulfill it.

POINT II.— This watchfulness should be **exact.** The devil, who is the enemy of mankind, is cunning. The world in which those subject to superiors dwell is full of dangers, and they ever find many ways of withdrawing themselves from the watchfulness of those placed over them. It is not enough for superiors to rest satisfied with careless watching; until they watch solicitously, they will not prove vigilant enough.

POINT III.— This watchfulness should be **continual.** We are bound to infer that those who had charge of the father of the family's field watched over it during daytime. The enemy, however, availed himself of the night, *"while men were asleep."* If you are in the position of a superior, examine whether your watchfulness possess these qualities; if only an inferior, put not yourself in such a condition as to have to be watched. This is the best way of showing your gratitude towards your superiors.

Thursday.

THE ENEMY SOWED COCKLE AMONG THE WHEAT.

POINT I.— Charity urges us to **rejoice at our neighbor's welfare**; envy, on the contrary, is an abominable vice which makes a person wretched at sight of the happiness of others and causes him to rejoice at their mischances. It is an unruly passion, which leads a man to commit all sorts of crimes that he may injure those who annoy him. Let us dread this disgraceful vice, which is, withal, most dangerous and very widespread.

POINT II.— The envious man is **wroth with God** Himself; is angered because God does good to men; willingly would he stop the flow of His graces; he thwarts those who procure God's glory, and depreciates the holiest deeds, if he be not himself their doer. We should not be surprised that God punished this vice so severely in Cain, in Core and in so many other envious persons; let us fear similar chastisements, if we be guilty of a vice so opposed to the goodness of God.

Point III.— Attachment to the possessions and glory of the world is a cause of envy; but we ought to be convinced that God ever gives us more than we deserve. Let us be humble, satisfied with what we have and what we are, and we shall cease from being envious. Woe to those who are ruled by this vice. *"Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain"* (St. Jude 2).

Friday.

"Suffer both to grow until the harvest"
(St. Matt. xiii. 30).

Point I.— It is not from unconcern about His Church that God tolerates **sinners** within its bosom as well as the **good,** but **in order that these may exercise patience** under the afflictions they suffer from the wicked. Let us profit by such troubles, and the Judge Who will punish their malice will reward our virtue.

Point II.— God bears with **sinners to try the faithfulness of the good.** It is easy to be good when we are in company with good people, but to remain faithful to God in the midst of manifold scandals and of numerous enemies who deride and persecute the good — this renders virtue more glorious to God and more meritorious to the faithful.

POINT III.— God bears with **sinners, that we may exercise humility** by seeing what we are liable to. If we commit neither so many nor so great sins as others, it is not because our nature is better than theirs, but because God has preserved us from falling; were it not for His help, we should be perhaps worse than they. Let us thank God for His graces and beseech Him to grant the like to sinners, who will possibly make a better use of them than we do.

Saturday.

ON AVOIDING BAD COMPANY.

POINT I.— We should not without good reason **hold intercourse with wicked people.** To like the society of those who despise God, amounts to despising Him ourselves; it is disobeying God, Who expressly forbids it: "*We charge you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother walking disorderly*" (2 THESS. iii. 6). Let us reverence God as we ought, and we shall submit to this injunction.

POINT II.— To associate with evil-doers is to **scandalize our neighbor,** who is encouraged by our bad example to do the like, or who thinks we resemble those whose society we frequent. It is simply to encourage libertines, who might return to a better mind if no one associated with them. Have we any part in this crying scandal?

Point III.— To associate with evil-doers is to **give scandal ourselves** and to run the risk of being lost. The firmest virtue is insensibly impaired by the society and example of a dissolute companion; we gradually become accustomed to think, speak and act as he does. God withdraws His graces, to punish our rashness and disobedience; and thus we become evil. *"A friend of fools shall become like unto them."* There is a proverb: "Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you what you are."

The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

ON THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD-SEED.

Point I.— This little seed represents **Our Savior,** Who **outwardly seemed small** and contemptible, but Who possessed inwardly infinite strength and virtue. This He has made us feel by His Passion that has redeemed the world; by His graces, which are the cause of our salvation; by the Eucharist, the source of joy, strength and happiness. Let us profit by the virtue He imparts to us by these means, and rejoice that we are mean and despicable as He was in the eyes of the world.

Point II.— Jesus Christ, Who **at first seemed so insignificant,** has become **great** indeed, *"a great tree."* He is the Redeemer of the world, the Head of men and angels, an object of adoration to the whole earth, the hope of the universe. Let us rejoice at His greatness and thank Him for having marked us among the number of His true worshipers. Let us renew our engagement to serve Him and yield Him homage and love.

Point III.— This little seed has become a **mighty tree**, and the birds of the air dwell in its branches. These branches are, the doctrines of His gospel, the law which He proclaimed, His counsels, Sacraments, Sacrifice, example, miracles and mysteries. Saintly men and women, who are the birds of the air, have dwelt in them through their frequent meditations. Thus have they found rest, food and security; let us too draw benefit, even as they did, from the like means of grace.

Monday.

ON SMALL FAULTS.

Point I.— Small faults are to be feared, because they have **lamentable consequences.** They lead us into great sins. We grow used to sins seemingly trifling, and, by force of habit, we easily yield to faults of greater moment; little by little we become very wicked. Great crimes startle us at once; but little sins let us grow accustomed to them. A single spark may cause a great conflagration: *" He who despiseth small things shall fall little by little."*

Point II.— When the **devil** has got the better of us in small things, he will next **attack us in**

greater; when he has gained a little, he will exact far more. If we resist him as to small sins, he will not venture on urging greater ones. He knows well that whoso is faithful in small things will likewise be faithful in greater.

POINT III.— When we offend **God** by small failings, He will allow us to **fall into greater.** The faults we call trifling deprive us of fervor and devotion, they cool down our love to God and make us set less store on His friendship and tenderness; so, in order to punish us, He permits us to commit shameful sins. If His love restrain us not, fear ought to do so: *"Who fears God neglects nothing,"* says the Holy Ghost. So that, even if these slight faults were not a greater harm than all the evils of the world, a harm which should not be done were it to save the whole human race and an evil which must be expiated by fire in the future life, we should shrink from committing them lest we might perish everlastingly.

Tuesday.

ON TAKING CARE TO DO LITTLE THINGS WELL.

POINT I.— **In the service of God nothing is unimportant.** Things of seemingly small import to us are just those which God loves, since He wishes to have our whole heart and obedience. Men may aspire after great things, inasmuch as they need them. God has need of nothing. In His service and in the worship we render Him, the smallest ceremonies and the slightest actions, when performed fervently, delight the Sacred Heart. Were a king to ask me for a flower I am holding in my hand, it would be churlish to withhold it and to plead that I prefer offering him a large tree which it is not in my power to give.

POINT II.— That which should **make me holy is never unimportant.** We should sanctify ourselves by the things we do daily. We deceive ourselves when any one of us says: I should like to practice austerites and to live a contemplative life, as St. Paul and Hilarion did; I should like to suffer for God in chains and fire. Let us make our usual meditation well and accept the mortifications of our state of life; let us bear patiently rebuffs, contempt and harsh words. Our sanctification consists in this; all else, when the opportunity for it is far out of reach, is nothing more than a pleasing fancy.

POINT III.— That which is to be **rewarded with eternal happiness is never unimportant.** The slighest act of virtue, the observance of a little rule, or the uplifting of the heart to God, merits the glory, the pleasures, the riches of paradise and the possession of God Himself. Everything is great which leads to this great blessing; everything is small that has no reference to God Almighty.

Wednesday.

ON HUMILITY.

POINT I.— The mustard-seed, which is a very tiny seed and, in Palestine, produces so large a plant, represents humility, which makes us **small in our own eyes**, but precious and great in the eyes of God. By self-humiliation Jesus Christ disarmed the justice of His Father and saved mankind; by humility the saints have attained to highest sanctity, have merited heaven's chiefest favors and worked greatest wonders on earth. By its means I may become capable of anything: without it I may strive laboriously, yet make but little progress.

POINT II.— Humility renders us **wishful to be unknown** to the world; still, the more it seeks obscurity, the more it is esteemed and honored by all. Greatness may inspire fear and talents admiration, but add conceit to these, and you will draw down upon yourself the scorn of others. Glory flies from those who run after it.

POINT III.— Humility which **lowers us in our own eyes** constitutes withal **our greatness,** strength and glory. It raises us up above the highest honors the world has it in its power to confer, because it discloses to us their dangers, and makes us use them with thankfulness accompanied by fear. It strengthens us in our difficulties, making us lean solely but firmly on the Almighty. It is the cause of our merit rendering us holier than others, if we be more humble. When shall we understand the importance and the advantages of humility?

Thursday.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed" (St. Matt. xiii. 31).

Point I.— The grain of mustard-seed is further a figure of the **Christian Church**, which comprises at first only a **small number** of simple and uncouth men attached to the Savior. Let us wonder at the power of Our Lord, Who has achieved things so great with instruments so weak.

Point II.— The plant that springs up from the grain of mustard-seed becomes as large as a tree. Thus the **Church**, which was so obscure in its beginning, has spread **throughout the world** and by the truthfulness of its doctrines and the holiness of its maxims has risen above all false religions. Let us return thanks to Our Lord for having vouchsafed us knowledge of these and let us practice them to the utmost.

Point III.— From the stem of the grain of mustard-seed **branches shoot forth** in which the birds of the air dwell: *"The birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof."* In the instructions, Sacraments and helps given by the Church, the great ones of the world, the noblest intellects, the most hardened sinners, as well as the most fervent saints find repose and happiness in time and for eternity. How much are we to be pitied if we neglect to avail ourselves of them!

Friday.

ON GRACE.

POINT I.— A holy thought, a pang of sorrow, a salutary inspiration, or a good desire seem but small things, yet are they **graces invaluable,** dearly bought blessings from Our Lord, the price of the blood of Jesus Christ and proofs of His love for us. Should I have fostered so little esteem and gratitude for them had I seriously thought of this?

POINT II.— The first **seeds of grace** are the **seeds of virtues,** of merits and of salvation; by the good use we make of them we deserve more. They are capable of leading us to highest sanctity if we be faithful to them. God gives them to us that we may increase in virtue. Let us by corresponding with His designs benefit by His goodness.

POINT III.— The **abuse of one grace prevents us from receiving others,** or as powerful ones, at least, and may end by leading us insensibly into the gravest irregularities. How many sinners would have been saints had they profited by the stings of conscience which we disregard every day! Let us abide in fear of punishment.

Saturday.

ON THE PASSIONS.

POINT I.— A passion is of little moment in its outset, but, however feeble at first, it is an evil always dangerous, which if it be not overcome may have **terrible consequences**; the least of the passions may lead up to the gravest crimes. Let us watch and pray that we may be kept from such harm; let us crush the enemy while it is still weak.

POINT II.— An unmortified passion after having caused sin **produces a habit** of it, because it leads reason astray; it hinders reflection and by the baneful impressions which it causes, puts the heart out of order. Let us have no mercy on so dangerous an enemy.

POINT III.— From confirmed habit passion leads to **impenitence and reprobation,** since it makes us dislike virtue and leaves no disposition in the soul save for evil; it represents conversion as too difficult, makes us despair of our own strength and of God's mercy and thus entails the loss of the soul. Resist beginnings. Let us labor courageously and betimes to subdue our passions, lest they lead us to everlasting perdition.

Septuagesima Sunday.

"Go you also into My vineyard."

Point I.— It is glorious indeed for us to be **associated with the Apostles** and Apostolic men, with so many Prelates, Martyrs, Doctors and other evangelical workers, who have labored and are still laboring in the Church, which is the beloved vineyard of Jesus Christ. It is a great advantage for us to work for a Master Who is so faithful to His promises and so liberal in His rewards and to labor in a cause He values so much and loves so greatly. Let us thank Him for having done us the honor to choose us as fellow-laborers with Himself.

Point II.— The toilers must **enlarge the vineyard**, must cultivate and protect it, must employ every effort for this purpose; they must serve the Church by example, by word, by the pen, by toil and by shedding their blood, if need be. Are we worthy laborers? Do we aspire to be such?

Point III.— Each of the laborers should **begin by the care of his own soul**, which is the part of the vineyard Our Lord has specially made over to him. A laborer of the Gospel is not fit to make others holy if he be not himself holy. What imprudence would it be to obtain the salvation of others and to neglect one's own! *"They have made me the keeper in the vineyards; my vineyard I have not kept"* (Cant. i. 5).

Monday.

ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

"Why stand ye all the day idle?" (ST. MATT. xx. 6).

POINT I.— Three truths concerning time should rouse us to employ it well. The first is, time has been given us only that **we may win eternity.** For this it is that we are in the world, for this we are living, and for this we ought to live. Let us pity the numberless Christians who while away their life in doing nothing, or in doing everything but what they ought to do. Let us not be of the number of those whose conduct should give us real cause to pity them.

POINT II.— **At each moment we may win a happy eternity.** No single action done for God, however small it be, no word even, nor mere uplifting of the heart but may merit reward everlasting. Complain not therefore of the shortness of life, it is long enough for God's designs. However short it be, if we use it well we shall be among the eternally rich, of whom the Scripture speaks: *"the rich men of eternity."* We have only to employ each moment in the proper manner.

POINT III.— When **time is ended**, there will be **no longer means to earn eternity.** Our lifetime is the time for battling, working, putting out our talents to interest and heaping up treasures. Eternity is for the enjoyment of the victory and of the blessings we have earned.

Death puts an end to time and leaves us only sorrow everlasting for having used it so unworthily. This is, however, a useless regret: *"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"* (JEREMIAS viii. 20).

Tuesday.

COMPARISON BETWEEN OUR LABOR AND ITS REWARD.

"Call the laborers and pay them their hire" (ST. MATT. xx. 8).

POINT I.— Our labor is indeed **slight** compared with what we do for the world and the devil. The reward is an immense weight of glory and happiness. What is a good work, a trifling mortification, or a short prayer as compared with the riches, the honors, and pleasures of the abode of God?

POINT II.— Labor is sweetened by **consolations** which deprive it of its hardness and bitterness. The reward is exceeding great, infinite blessings unmixed with any ill.

POINT III.— Our labor is for a **short time only**; it is soon over and ends, at latest, with this life, which is not long; whereas the reward will never cease, it is everlasting. I shall enjoy the fruits of my labor for all eternity, as long as God is God. Let us be convinced that God is the only Master Who deserves to be served.

Wednesday.

On the Necessity for Zeal.

Point I.— **God seems well-nigh forgotten** in these our days; He is but little loved, and badly served; we see Him outraged at all times and in every place; how can God think lovingly of us if we are unconcerned at such perverseness? We should pray and lament over the blindness of men, if we cannot bring them to love God. Let us not flatter ourselves we love Him enough, if we remain indifferent as to what concerns His glory.

Point II.— **Souls are being perverted**; your fellow-creatures, your brethren in the faith, are hastening wantonly and in great numbers to hell: are you a Christian, are you a man, if you be not touched by their destruction? You would help a neighbor to drag an animal out of a pit into which it had fallen: what should you not do to hold back a soul from hell? What have you done in this intent hitherto? What do you purpose doing in the future?

Point III.— **Libertines spare no pains to lead souls astray**; heretics and infidels strive to do this by conversation and example, by their writings and insinuating ways; the devil achieves conquests every day; all show their misplaced zeal to advance a cause which brings ruin in its train; and yet some who consider themselves virtuous are ashamed to uphold virtue, perhaps even to practice it! What a subject for condemnation, fear, confusion and sorrow should this be to us!

Thursday.

"Go you also into My vineyard."

Point I.— God calls us to **His service.** He is our Creator, Redeemer, King, Master and Father; we cannot without ingratitude and injustice disobey Him. Why do we put off giving ourselves truly to Him? Why do we serve Him so tepidly? *"In spirit fervent: serving the Lord"* (Rom. xii. 11).

Point II.— Men glory in being in the service of kings of this world: is not the **service of God** infinitely **more glorious?** All, even sinners and the lukewarm, respect the true servants of God, who are esteemed by all the court of heaven, for God takes delight in glorifying those who serve Him and in making them respected by others. We should pity those who blush to serve God and take shame to ourselves if we be of the number.

Point III.— **God's servants are happy**; they enjoy peace of heart and repose of conscience. The friendship of God, His help, His favors and the hope of heaven more than make up for the arduousness of practicing virtue. Let us attach ourselves sincerely and steadfastly to God's service, and we shall enjoy all these advantages.

Friday.

ON GOD'S SERVICE.

POINT I.— God **requires me to serve Him;** His sovereign greatness and my dependent state do not allow me to deliberate. His will should be the sole rule of all my actions. Am I doing all that He wishes me to do, exacts from me, when He wills it and as He wills it?

POINT II.— I am **dependent on God** in everything and for everything. All the moments of my life, all my thoughts, words and actions should be consecrated to Him. Have not vanity, self-love, and self-interest robbed Him of most of my acts? What a cause for sorrow and confusion when I examine closely into the details of my life!

POINT III.— All that **I do not perform for God is lost to me**; the most brilliant actions, nay, even the holiest, please Him not, unless they are done for His sake. He promises to reward those alone who serve Him; He threatens the useless servant and the wicked servant with the like punishment. Can I think seriously about these truths without fearing for my soul and reforming my conduct?

Saturday.

ON IDLENESS.

POINT I.— Idleness **offends Almighty God.** To idle means to waste time, talents and the graces God has deigned to grant us for His glory. We shall have to render account for every idle word. What an account, then, shall we have to render for so much time spent in idleness, or devoted to frivolous pursuits!

Point II.— Idleness is **dangerous to ourselves,** because it is the source of all kinds of vice. A man has every cause to fear when he is dawdling away his time; he cannot remain long doing nothing. He who knows not how to employ himself usefully will soon do something hurtful to his soul. We ought to employ many spare moments in prayer and in spiritual reading, and then they will all become precious.

Point III.— Idleness is **injurious to our neighbor.** We can at all times employ ourselves in the service of those set over us, in the support of our family, in the duties of our state of life, and in works of charity. How many poor are there to relieve, how many sick to comfort, how many sinners who need prayers! Those who have no idea of how to fill up their time are they who are altogether wanting in charity. Are not we of this number?

Sexagesima Sunday.

"*The sower went forth to sow*" (St. Matt. xiii. 3).

Point I.— The seed is the **word of God,** which we hear so often; nay, more than this, it is the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking within us, whereby He moves us to profit by the external word, namely, by light in the mind, inspirations, and stirrings of the heart. Let us thank God for bestowing them on us so liberally and with such special kindness. The graces we actually possess would be enough to save a whole world, were they carefully turned to account.

POINT II.— If the good seed bring not forth fruit, it is always our own fault. Not to benefit by it is to despise the good which God has done us; to bring to naught all His merciful designs in our regard; to abuse unworthily a blessing which cost the labors, life, nay even Death, of our gracious Redeemer: He gave all these in order to merit His graces on our behalf.

POINT III.— The sower, in sowing his seed, expects to reap the fruit, and if the ground bring forth nothing, he abandons it. God gives us His graces and expects us to profit by them; if we benefit not by them, He is indignant, threatens, even curses the barren soil. Jesus Christ withdraws His graces and abandons us. The mind is deprived of supernatural light; the will grows unconcerned, and little by little we reach the lowest misery in store for the hardened heart. Let us fear the terrible justice of God.

Monday.

FOUR OBSTACLES PREVENTING US FROM PROFITING BY THE GRACE OF GOD.

"*The sower went forth to sow*" (ST. MATT. xiii. 3).

POINT I.— The first is **hardness of heart:** the seed of the sower fell on "*stony ground.*" When by attachment to evil, or long resistance to grace, our heart becomes as it were callous, graces are lavished on us in vain.

The second is **distraction of mind:** the seed fell "*by the wayside.*" A distracted mind, continually buried and absorbed in things of the outside world, never entering into itself, allows the graces God bestows to run to waste.

The third is the **multitude of cares** bearing on this present life and the worldly pursuits which prevent us from thinking about what God requires from us for our everlasting salvation. The seed "*fell among thorns.*" The thorns, says Our Savior, are the useless anxieties of life: "*The cares of this world.*"

The forth obstacle proceeds from the **artifices of the devil.** He is the wicked one which eateth up the grain thrown down. "*And the birds of the air ate them up*" (ST. MATT. xiii. 4). This calamity happens not to those who by Christian watchfulness keep the doors of their heart and mind closed to the devil.

Let us consider which of these obstacles prevents us from profiting by the graces we are continually receiving.

Tuesday.

ON THREE DISPOSITIONS WE SHOULD HAVE IN ORDER TO PROFIT BY GOD'S GRACES.

POINT I.— The first disposition is a **mind docile** and faithful to the principles of faith, without any undue bias, or prejudice, or attachment to principles contrary to faith, preventing us from giving heed to what God requires from us: *"They who, hearing the word, keep it"* (ST. LUKE viii. 15). The light from heaven is shed abundantly on a soul which listens to God's voice alone. Am I in this happy condition?

POINT II.— The second disposition is **goodness of heart**, that is, a real wish to profit by God's gifts: *"in a good and perfect heart."* This is the good ground which yields a hundredfold. Let us often repeat with Samuel: *Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth,* faithfully to execute Thy commands.

POINT III.— The third disposition is **constancy in doing the good** to which God disposes us by His graces. Our faithfulness in corresponding with one grace disposes us to receive others, and God rejoices in bestowing His talents on those who know how to turn them to account. *"They bring forth fruit with patience."* Should I not fear lest my unstable mind, sometimes fervent and at other times completely lukewarm, should compel God to deny me some portion of the graces destined in His mercy to procure for me perseverance and to crown it.

Wednesday.

"The seed is the word of God" (St. Luke viii. 11).

Point I.—Consider how **worthy, precious, and excellent** this word is; it comes from God Himself, Who has given it to men and inspires His ministers. The ministers of Our Lord announce to us the word of God, as they had received it from Him: *sicut est vere verbum Dei.* They preach it through God: *"God as it were exhorting by us"* (2 Cor. v. 20). They preach it in the name of God: *secundum præceptum Salvatoris.* Let us praise and thank the goodness of Our Lord and henceforth hear His Holy Word with greater reverence and docility.

Point II.—The **prophets, Jesus Christ and the Apostles** have announced the word at **peril of their lives**; they have sealed their testimony with their blood and by their death; men of zeal still risk their lives in order to proclaim it to unbelievers. Coward that I am, who make not the smallest effort to hear it, still less to obey it!

Point III.—The word has destroyed idolatry, has brought us to know God, the adorable Trinity, Jesus Christ, all His goodness, justice and rewards; has taught us the way to heaven, the enormity of sin and beauty of virtue; every day it converts a multitude of sinners. **What fruit is it producing in my heart?** If it serve not for my sanctification, it will serve for my condemnation. *"It shall not return to me void,"* says God, through His prophet Isaias (iv. 11).

Thursday.

EFFECTS OF THE WORD OF GOD.

POINT I.— The word of God is a **word of salvation,** *verbum salutis.* By this divine word has God established the reign of virtue and sanctified so many souls; by it also He wishes to convert and reform us; by it we have received the faith and without it shall never live the life of faith. Let us then never neglect a benefit so great and salutary.

POINT II.— The divine word is not intended by God to proclaim truths flattering to the senses, or to gratify the delicacy, curiosity, or passions of men, but **is meant for their salvation:** *"to give knowledge of salvation"* (LUKE i. 77). We should hence hear it in singleness of heart and solely that through it we may learn from God the science of salvation.

POINT III.— The same instruction which is profitable to some, leaves in the full disorder of their life those who receive not with docility the lessons conveyed to them, who forget them and meditate not on them, much less put them in practice. If **we would have the word of God profit us,** we should hear it with reverence, meditate on it with attention and obey it with courage. What an account shall we have to render for so much instruction neglected! *"Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth"* (I KINGS iii. 10). Speak to me, Lord, I am resolved to listen to Thee and to obey Thee.

Friday.

ON READING.

POINT I.— When we pray, we are speaking to God; but when we **read a spiritual book God speaks to us**, teaches us, reproves us. Let us be more diligent in reading spiritual books, because they contain the word of God; let us revive our faith and feeling of reverence by pious reading and adore, like St. Augustine, the Holy Spirit hidden under the outward form of the letter.

POINT II.— Inasmuch as a good book is valuable, in so much are bad books **hateful and abominable**; they injure the mind, pervert the heart, sully the conscience and ruin souls. Read good books often; the less taste you have for them the more do you need them and the more is your soul in languor. How many moments are lost to you which a little reading would render profitable! Fear death if you are wont to neglect the word of God, which is the word of life and the food of your soul.

POINT III.— **Read in order to learn, and not out of curiosity**; read little and slowly, but meditate and reflect much on what you read, and impress it upon your heart that you may gain profit by it. If reading does not cause us to improve, the reason is perhaps because we read too much and reflect not enough on what we read. First, let us begin our reading by asking for God's help: *"Give me understanding."* Secondly, let us meditate attentively on what we read:

"And I will search Thy law." Thirdly, let us resolve to put in practice the lessons we have received: *"And I will keep it with my whole heart"* (PSALM cxviii. 34).

Saturday.

THREE TRUTHS CONCERNING GRACE.

POINT I.— **Without grace** we can neither merit heaven nor accomplish any salutary work, **we cannot even think a good thought** or raise up our heart to God: *"Without Me you can do nothing"* (ST. JOHN xv. 5). Let us humble ourselves at sight of our weakness, and entreat God confidently and with fervor to give us His grace.

POINT II.— **With the help of grace we can do everything,** can overcome the most violent temptations and most confirmed bad habits; can practice the greatest virtues, bear the greatest afflictions, and, like the martyrs, triumph over the severest tortures: *"I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me"* (PHILIP. iv. 13). Why, then, am I weak? It is because I do not labor to merit grace and therefore do not profit by it.

POINT III.— Grace will not save us **unless we correspond with it:** *"The grace of God with me"* (1 COR. xv. 10). We should correspond with it by doing the good it inspires us with for our sanctification; if we abuse it, it will serve for our condemnation: *"I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me"* (PSALM lxxxiv. 9).

Quinquagesima Sunday.

ON THE BLIND MAN RESTORED TO SIGHT ON THE ROAD NEAR JERICHO.

POINT I.—This blind man is aware of his misfortune, he **wishes to be restored to sight,** and craves to be cured. Let us confess we are blind as to what relates to salvation and to eternity. How many false lights do self-love and the love of the world produce in our mind, depriving us of the light of faith and of grace! Let us be ashamed because we have so little wish to be cured and because we do not apply for the remedy.

POINT II.—Everyone told the blind man to keep silent; but he cried out the louder, lest, if he missed this opportunity, he should never again find one so favorable: *"Jesus of Nazareth was passing by"* (ST. LUKE xviii. 37). Let us **avail ourselves of graces** and opportunities of salvation while we have them, and let no human respect hold us back. These graces pass by and do not return. *"I fear Jesus passing by,"* we should say with St. Augustine.

POINT III.—Jesus Christ **listened with complacency** to the prayer of the blind man and graciously granted him what he so earnestly asked for. The man when cured followed his benefactor with joy and gratitude and countless praises. Let us be surprised at the goodness of our dear Lord with regard to ourselves and employ in His service and for His glory the lights, graces and powers he has deigned to give us.

Monday.

ON THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD.

POINT I.—Jesus Christ, in order to **rouse sinners to contrition** and to penance, chose to receive the baptism administered by St. John the Baptist. All the humiliations of the Incarnation, Birth and even of the Passion and Death of Christ, cannot be compared with this humiliation, because in this mystery He assumes the semblance of sin and ranks Himself among the guilty more fully than in the other mysteries. Can any pride hold out at sight of such humility? Will anyone dare to think himself holy, when he sees the Saint of saints pass for a sinner.

POINT II.—Everything conspires to **glorify Jesus Christ in His humiliation.** St. John announces Him as the Messias, the Redeemer of Israel, the salvation of the world. The Holy Spirit descends on Him in the form of a dove. God the Father declares Him to be His beloved Son, in Whom He is well pleased. Our Lord teaches us by this example the truth of that saying which He will so often repeat: *"He that humbles himself shall be exalted."* Let us profit alike by the words spoken and the example given.

POINT III.— **Christian baptism,** which has regenerated us, and of which that of St. John was only a figure, produces **similar effects in us.** Jesus Christ by the faith which He bestows upon us in this Sacrament, unites us to Himself as members with their head, as branches with the vine, as children of the new covenant; the Holy Spirit takes possession of our soul by grace; the heavenly Father declares us to be His Children and His heirs. Let us thank God for this inestimable benefit, renew our engagement with our Divine Lord and profit by the blessing of our baptism.

Tuesday.

"*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted*" (ST. MATT. v. 5).

POINT I.— It is not enough to have renounced the pleasures and vain amusements of the world; we should **greviously deplore our sin** and weep also in compassion for the sins of others; we should moreover shed tears of devotion, considering ourselves as exiles from God and from His paradise. But alas! my soul, O Jesus, is dry ground without water; water it with Thy grace, and it will shed tears of contrition, compassion and devotion.

POINT II.— The blessing which Our Lord promises to those who mourn is that **they shall be comforted;** if they weep for their own sins they will obtain forgiveness; if they weep for the sins of their neighbor, they will obtain his conversion; if they weep because they are banished from heaven, they will be received within its precincts, and their tears will cease.

POINT III.— Let us keep **Our Savior's example** ever before us. Of Him we never read that He laughed, but we do read that he wept in the manger, at the grave of Lazarus, over His beloved Jerusalem and in the garden where he wept tears of blood: *Toto corpore flevit;* He wept in the whole of His body. His example should make us rejoice to weep, and the curse with which He threatens those who give themselves up laughingly to the senseless pleasures of the world should make us shrink from them.

Ash Wednesday.

ON THE THOUGHT OF DEATH.

"*Remember man, that dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.*"

POINT I.— The **thought of death** is an excellent **preparation for a holy life.** It detaches us from the world we must soon leave; moderates undue mirth; sweetens the bitterness of affliction; leads to repentance; causes us to do the good we shall be unable to perform after death; keeps us from sin. Never shall we offend God, says the Scripture, if we think of death, but shall serve Him with fervor. Let us cherish this wholesome thought. Everything we see will help us in this. *"He hath filled all things with death,"* says the wise man.

Point II.— In order to render the thought of death effectual, each one should think of it **as it concerns himself**, not saying in a general way, as preachers do from the pulpit, All men must die; but every one should say, I shall die; this body of which I take such care, is to be reduced to dust, to rottenness; to me the world will be no longer anything; I shall be for ever forgotten out of mind. Bitter is the thought, but faith and hope will sweeten it to us.

Point III.— It is not enough even to be mindful that death will come; we should remember, says the Holy Spirit, that it will **come soon:** *"Remember that death is not slow"* (Ecclus. xiv. 12). When we think of it as distant, it moves us not. Life is short; it is a vapor that vanishes in a moment, a drop of dew, a little smoke, as we are warned in Holy Writ. This year, this week, this day, perhaps even this very hour, may be the last of my life. I should be ever on the watch, that I be not taken by surprise.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday.

"Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven"
(St. Matt. vi. 20).

Point I.—Our Lord recommends us to labor to gain riches, not of this earth, the good things of which are but few, mixed with innumerable ills, and passing soon away, but in **heaven**, where the blessings are without measure; they are treasures where everything is eternal; neither thieves nor death can snatch them from us. These true riches are for us, and not for strangers, whose aim is to work for the world. Are not these treasures deserving of our esteem, our desires, our labors?

Point II.— Let us consider how much we can earn **by our good works.** The least act of virtue performed in a state of grace merits commendation during life, at death, at the judgment and in heaven. It possesses the power to obtain what is needful for us together with the remission of the penalty due to our sins; it merits paradise, that is to say, the glory, the delights and the riches of the abode of God. We can perform these actions at all times, and if we do so, what riches shall we not acquire? Shall we not be among the eternally rich — among those who are rich according to faith? *"The rich ones of eternity — the rich in faith."*

Point III.— It is true we can earn much, but it is still more true that we may **earn but little by** reason of **our negligence.** We accomplish very few holy actions, deprive them of their merit by imperfect intentions, waste time, and at death, as after a dream, there remains to us nothing. Let us think beforehand what we can do this Lent, which will perhaps be the last of our life. Let our fasts, prayers, and good works be performed with fervor. Let us labor to heap up treasures in heaven.

Friday after Ash Wednesday.

"Love your enemies, do good to them . . . pray for them" (St. Matt. v. 44).

Point I.— God not only forbids revenge and open enmity, but also willful dislikes and the slightest cherished **bitterness of heart.** Let us examine our heart especially before approaching the altar, in order to see if we harbor not some bitterness of heart exciting the anger of Him Whom we are wistful to receive.

Point II.— **Love.** We ought to love even those who love not us, those whom we believe to be hostile to us. The command of our Sovereign Lord, His example, that of His Son and of His saints, show us that it is possible to act so. The love of God, our own interest, and the merit of this love should urge thereto.

Point III.— **Do good to them.** We must do good to those who harm us, or who wish us evil. We shall thereby be the children of our Heavenly Father, Who causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall for His greatest enemies as well as for His friends.

Point IV.— **Pray for them.** As though unable to repay the good which the bad treatment we receive from our enemies procures for us, we should beg God to reward them.

Point V.— If we owe these fourfold duties to our greatest enemies, ought we not practice them with **reference to our brethren,** when through inadvertence or levity, or for any other reason, they seem to be thwarting us?

Saturday after Ash Wednesday.

On Christian Hope.

Point I.—"*Be of good heart: it is I, fear ye not*" (St. Matt. xiv. 27). These are the words of Our Savior to His disciples when they were seized with fear at beholding what they took for an apparition walking on the sea. He reassures us in like mode, giving us firm trust, when we are afraid, when we pray and when we work. He assumes the name of the God of Hope — *Deus spei.* It is in Him we should place all our trust for time and for eternity. All other support is only weakness and vanity.

Point II.— He is our Creator and promises **He will not abandon** His work, but will watch over it. He is our Redeemer and has a predilection for those whom He has ransomed. "*Fear not, for I have redeemed thee*" (Is. xliii. 1). He is our Sovereign King. He possesses infinite power, nothing is impossible to Him, not even arduous. Is it possible for our hope to have a better foundation than providence, goodness and power infinite?

Point III.— God wishes us to hope in Him, but He also desires that this hope should be **without presumption** or negligence. To hope that God will do everything without our doing anything ourselves is blameworthy presumption and unbearable neglect. *"Trust in the Lord and do good,"* said David (PSALM xxxvi. 3). Hope should be without fear that God will fail us; our own weakness we should fear and should act by the power of grace; this is the true way of salvation.

First Sunday in Lent.

ON THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.

POINT I.— Our Lord chose to be tempted that He might teach us that temptation is a great good when God exposes us to it. By bravely resisting we show our fidelity to God and glorify Him by triumphing over His enemies; the penalty due to our sins is blotted out, virtue is strengthened, grace is increased and we merit glory. Blessed are they who suffer temptation! Take courage: should our enemies attack us, we shall conquer. The help of grace will never be wanting to us; with it we can do all things.

POINT II.— Our Lord withdrew into the desert when he was tempted, to teach us that temptation is a great evil **when we incur danger** by putting ourselves in the occasion of it. Not to fear is mere foolhardiness. Great saints have been lost by not fearing the occasions of sin, and we ourselves have been often overcome. To put ourselves in the way of temptation is to tempt God; it is to risk the loss of grace, virtue, holiness, paradise. He who exposes himself to danger will perish in it. Let us think beforehand of the occasions of temptation which we may be exposed to and by fleeing from them save ourselves from ruin.

Monday.

On the Last Judgment.

See the First Sunday in Advent, *page 1.*

Tuesday.

"My house shall be called the house of prayer"
(St. Matt. xxi. 13.)

Point I.— The early Christians were wont to be told that it is a **dreadful thing to spend a day without praying.** Is it not, however, more dreadful still that one professing openly to be exceptionally religious, who has broken with the world to attach himself solely to God and secure the salvation of his soul, should pass days and even weeks without employing in a fitting manner a quarter of an hour in prayer, and that his mind should be wholly taken up with vain and empty thoughts? Meditation, it would sometimes seem, is the least worthy of our occupations, we omit it so easily, prepare it so carelessly, make it so badly.

Point II.— It is impossible to persevere in virtue **without the help of prayer** and meditation. This is the opinion of all the saints, and experience but too clearly proves it. The falls which surprise us are generally caused by our negligence and by the abandonment of this holy exercise.

Point III.— On the other hand it is **impossible** that he who **goes through his meditations** with exactness should **not make great progress** in the ways of our Lord. Were we to spend an hour every day in thinking of the eternal truths, of the means of sanctifying ourselves and of pleasing God, and were we to take care to foresee and diligently seek out opportunities for putting in practice our good resolutions, we should become saints. Consequently, as we have to make our meditations, let us make them well.

Wednesday.

"The men of Ninive shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it"
(St. Matt. xii. 41).

Point I.— Three things will put us to shame at the great judgment-day and draw down severe punishment upon us as compared with seculars, nay even with unbelievers. The first will be the **instruction** we have had given us and the many great lights we have received. We are not only acquainted with religion and its mysteries, which heathens are ignorant of, but we know in addition nearly everything that is revealed in Scripture. There is scarcely a truth contained in the Bible on which we have not meditated. The servant who knows his master's will and does not do it will be severely punished.

Point II.— The great **number of graces** and means of salvation which we have had will increase our confusion. What shall we say when the heathens reproach us with the fact that the help we have received for our own sanctification would have sufficed to save a whole pagan nation, had God only bestowed it? Let us fear the abuse which we are making of grace.

Point III.— Our **state of life** will be also a cause of shame. After the pledges given at our baptism and in religion, we taught, preached, told others that they ought to serve God, to flee from sin, practice virtue and win paradise by giving heed to the Gospel. This we insisted had to be done: yet we ourselves did it not. What a reproach! Let us save ourselves from this shame by practicing what we preach to others.

Thursday.

On the Woman of Canaan.

Point I.— This distressed mother, seeing the evils which the devil inflicts upon her dear daughter, is anxious to find a remedy. She leaves her home and country and applies to Jesus Christ, Whose renown has made Him known to her as a worker of miracles; she believes, hopes, prays and straightway, instead of the pagan she was, becomes one of the faithful. Her **daughter's illness appeared to be an evil,** whilst in reality it was a means used by Providence to obtain for her **the greatest of blessings.** Let us rest satisfied that what we call afflictions, misfortunes, and crosses are, in the designs of God, a great blessing to us. He seems to be afflicting us, whilst He is really showing to us His love. Let us look at things from this point of view, and never give way to repining.

Point II.— Let us consider what this stranger does. She entreats Our Lord earnestly, she bears His repulse patiently, she humbles herself without losing heart, **she is unflinching,** she summons the Apostles to her aid. We teach others how to pray; now from this woman we may ourselves take a lesson.

Point III.— Let us consider Our Savior's behavior, that we may profit by it and be **full of confidence,** even when He seems to be taking part against us. He listens to the prayer of this woman without appearing to be touched by it; He repels her and speaks slightingly of her and her whole nation; yet afterwards He praises her trust and speaks of it with admiration. He grants what she desires and wishes it to be known that the mother's faith has cured the daughter. If we pray with humble confidence, everything will be granted us.

Friday.

ON THE CURE OF THE MAN STRICKEN WITH PALSY.

"I have no man" (ST. JOHN v. 7).

POINT I.— This afflicted man has learnt from his own experience how little one can **rely on a fellowman,** since, during thirty-eight years, he had not found any relative, or friend, or charitable person to give him the succor he needed in order to be cured. Had not our Blessed Lord taken pity on him, he would to all appearances have died of his disease. Let us learn to put all our hope in God and rest assured that if we rely on the goodness, faithfulness, or power of men, we shall be deceived: *"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man"* (JEREMIAS xvii. 5).

POINT II.— This curse uttered by the prophet may be a foretelling of **what will happen should we place our reliance on creatures** and a judgment announced in the name of God, who will certainly punish our ill-regulated life. Terrified at a prediction which experience verifies, at a petition which is carried into effect and at a sentence without appeal, let us center our whole trust in God. His faithfulnes is such that He never will forsake us.

POINT III.— We may **apply to men** confidently, when we have reason **to believe that God will use them** as instruments to procure us good; when this trust is not severed from that we repose in God, or does not oblige us to do anything contrary to duty, then God does not forbid us to expect and invite the help of man. Let us remember ever to have recourse to God.

Saturday.

ON THE TRANSFIGURATION.

POINT I.— Our Heavenly Father teaches us three things which constitute the **greatness of our adorable Master.** First, that Jesus is His Son, not by adoption or resemblance or preferment, as the just are made children of God, but His Son by nature, by identity of essence, equal to His Father in all things, almighty, eternal, immense, good, wise and just, as is the Father. This praise includes all other praise. What joy then ought we to feel if we love God dearly! He Whom men treat as a fanatic, a demoniac, an ignorant and wicked person, is the Saint of saints, the God of the universe, the Creator of all things. How the glory of this title more than makes up for the shame of so many outrages!

POINT II.— The second commendation is that He is the Beloved, in Whom the Father delights: *"This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased"* (ST. MATT. xvii. 5). He is **the beloved** for His own sake, **because He is the Son,** whereas the just are only loved because they are friends of the Son. It is in this Son that the Father loves us; it is through this Son that the Father has chosen to redeem and sanctify us.

The more closely we are attached to Our Savior, the more we shall be loved.

POINT III.— The third thing in praise of Our Savior is, that **He is our Mediator,** our **Legislator** and our **Teacher:** *"Hear Him."* He announces to us the behests of His Father, instructs us in His law and teaches us the true way to heaven: *"Hear Him."* All our happiness depends on our docility in hearing, and our faithfulness in practicing, whatsoever He teaches us. *"Seek ye God, and your soul shall live,"* says the Psalmist (Ps. lxviii. 33).

Second Sunday in Lent.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF THE CHRISTIAN.

"It is good for us to be here" (ST. MATT. xvii. 4).

POINT I.— A Christian is happy because he is **free from evils attendant on infidelity,** to wit, from error, dissolute habits and damnation. Outside the Church nothing is found but error and falsehood. It is the commission of horrible sins which lead into everlasting ruin those who refuse allegiance to the Church. Had I been born among idolaters, Turks, or heretics, I might now be an idolater, a Turk, or an obstinate heretic. Whatever my parents were, that I might myself have been. My life might have been disorderly if theirs had been, and my damnation well-nigh certain. My good God, what great things has

Thy providence done for us in preserving us from such evils!

Point II.— A Christian is happy on account of the **blessings which he enjoys.** He possesses faith, which discloses to him the greatness of God and the blessings of a future life; he has grace, which makes him the child, friend and heir of God; further, he has a vast array of actual graces, the Sacraments, the Word of God, the example of Jesus Christ and of the saints, even a participation of the Divine Nature; *Consortes divinæ naturæ.* (2 St. Peter i. 4). This is a happiness we shall only comprehend thoroughly in heaven. Let us not render it profitless.

Point III.— A Christian is happy through his **hope of eternal happiness** in heaven. One religion alone leads thither. A Christian merits heaven by the least of his actions performed in a state of grace. He is ushered into heaven at the very moment of death, a grace not granted to the holiest under the old law. Let us thank God now for this inestimable blessing, until we can offer Him more perfect thanks in heaven.

Note.— The following Meditation is also for this Sunday.

Second Sunday in Lent.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF PARADISE.

"It is good for us to be here"
(ST. MATT. xvii. 4).

POINT I.—We shall be happy in Paradise inasmuch as we shall have **no wish unfulfilled.** All our desires will be satisfied. The grandeur of God's house, with its beauty, splendor, pleasantness; the complete bliss of the soul and all its powers; the happiness of the body in all its senses; the company of angels, of saints, of the Blessed Virgin, of Jesus Christ, of God Himself; all knowledge, riches, delights; the happy, calm and secure life we shall there enjoy; such raptures will satisfy all our desires; *"I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear"* (PSALM xvi. 15). How can we now understand fully such happiness as this?

POINT II.—We shall be happy in Paradise, since there will be **nothing to fear.** Our fears and our longings are the source of all our worry here below. Of what can we possibly be afraid in heaven? Of troubles, sin, death, the end of our happiness approaching, or a sense of satiety? None of these things shall we encounter there. Neither sorrow nor sin can enter heaven, for to sin we shall be unable; happiness will be everlasting, pleasures will be ever new, without surfeit. Let us say with St. Bernard: *"Paradise, my dear home, how beautiful thou art: how lovely thou art!"*

POINT III.— This God promises us; now let us reflect on **what He requires of us**: First, that we should not forfeit this happiness for a mere bauble, for the pleasure of a moment; secondly, that we should strive to merit it; thirdly, that we should desire it earnestly; fourthly, that we should comfort ourselves, amid our sufferings, afflictions and miseries, with a firm hope of a happiness never to end.

Monday.

"*You shall die in your sins*" (ST. JOHN viii. 21).

POINT I.— Not only should grievous sinners fear this threat of Our Savior, but also souls that are **lukewarm** in God's service, who seek God feebly, and do good languidly and from custom. God says He can barely endure such lukewarmness and will in the end cast them forth with abhorrence. "*Because thou art lukewarm, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth*" (APOC. iii. 16). What a misfortune to live in such a condition! Have I not real cause for fearing that I am in it?

POINT II.— The **signs of this lukewarmness** so hateful to God are: negligence during spiritual exercises; constant dissipation of the mind that attends neither to itself nor to God; a habit of acting on every occasion without inner spirit; negligence in acquiring the virtues fitting to our state of life; distaste for things spiritual; a conscience utterly unconcerned about small faults. Can I doubt whether I am in this plight of lukewarmness, since I bear all the marks of being in it?

POINT III.— This condition of soul is **very dangerous,** because we are, when in this temper, less aware than grievous sinners are of our disease, inasmuch as our sins, being less noticeable, impress less deeply, and thus we become habituated easily to their presence; and further, because this evil is almost without remedy. The eternal truths terrify not those who are in such evil case; they frequent the Sacraments and say their prayers from habit and without fruit. Who can possibly expel such lukewarmness, if God in His mercy do not so, through that grace to which everything readily yields?

Tuesday.

"According to their works do ye not"
(ST. MATT. xxiii. 3).

POINT I.— **Example** has a wondrous **power to induce us to sin.** It discloses to us evil whereof we were ignorant; removes the natural shrinking and sense of shame, which hitherto kept us from wrongdoing; causes us to lose esteem of virtue once highly prized by us; fills us with ideas contrary to righteousness; and, little by little, through the example of others, we are involved in ruin. Let us ask forgiveness from God for having so often set a bad example and for having so often followed that given by others.

Point II.— If we **copy bad example,** it is because the want of interior light, fear of contempt, weakness, complacency and human respect make us do so. Let us strengthen ourselves to overcome such weaknesses through the love we owe to God, and an earnest wish to save our souls. Of what profit will the example of others be at the judgment-day, since we are to be judged by our own works alone?

Point III.— Bad example draws strength from the great number of those who set it, or from their influence, whether in the world, the Church or in religious life — in a word, from the seeming virtue of those whom we hold in esteem. We should, nevertheless, wherever we see vice, detest it as an **object of horror** and never regard it as **something to be copied**; look upon it as a disgrace, never as a pattern. We should regulate our lives by the law of God and by the example for Our Lord and of the saints. *"Blessed is the man who hath not stood in the way of sinners. . . . But . . . in the law of the Lord he shall meditate"* (Psalm i. 1,2).

Wednesday.

"*You know not what you ask*" (St. Matt. xx. 22).

Point I.—It is not the two sons of Zebedee alone who understand neither what they want, nor what they are asking for; we fall into the like error, when we wish intensely for anything else than paradise and the holiness that leads to God. **We often yearn for what we ought to dread**; never are our desires satisfied; they fill us with trouble and anxiety, and in our prayers we ask very often for something as a blessing which would prove to us an evil. Let us therefore wish for but little, and desire that little in moderation.

Point II.—**We are unreasonable in our wishes** and in our prayers; God is infinitely reasonable when He refuses what we with eager longing ask for. He knows what is good for us and loves us tenderly. Therefore He refuses to grant something, and this we consider to be a great misfortune. But He has great designs connected with our eternal welfare, and what we ask for would imperil its loss.

Point III.—Let us be convinced that self-love and **our passions hinder us from knowing what we should wish** or ask for; that God, Who rules us by His infinite wisdom, knows what we need, and that since He loves us, He will give it us. Assured of this, let us proclaim to Him that we will only ask for what He decides to be for our good, and if we ever should ask for anything else, we now implore Him to refuse it.

Thursday.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

POINT I.—Let us consider these two men **during their life.** Lazarus is a just man, the friend of God and a saint, yet is he poor and miserable and borne down by suffering; the other is a bad man, abhorred by God; he is rich, however, has abundance and constant enjoyment. Let us glorify God's dealings in this matter. He tries His chosen ones by sufferings in order to increase their merits, and allows the wicked to prosper, so that they may have reward in this life for the small amount of good they may do. Let us not envy them their prosperity.

POINT II.—Let us consider them **at the moment of death.** The wretchedness and poverty of Lazarus are for ever past; the luxury, wealth, pleasures of the bad rich man are also sped, to return no more. Dives carries away with him none of his prosperity; to Lazarus nothing remains of his misery. Let us learn to despise the good things which pass away with life and to fear not the ills which end at death.

POINT III.—Let us consider them **after death.** Lazarus is wealthy and happy and loaded with glory for eternity. The rich man is in the uttermost torment in hell, where his luxurious and criminal life has plunged him; he will for ever cry out that he is in flames, and will never get one single drop of water to relieve his thirst. Who would not prefer the fate of Lazarus to that of the wicked rich man? Let us imitate the patience, resignation, and saintliness of Lazarus, if we aspire to reach the same happiness. Let us shun the gluttony and profligacy of Dives, if we would avoid a like penalty.

Friday.

ON THE PAINS OF HELL.

"*He will bring those evil men to an evil end*" (ST. MATT. xxi. 41).

POINT I.— The pains of hell are **numberless.** Sufferings there are for the soul with each one of its powers and for the body with each of its senses. Hell is a prison in which shame, stench, torment, fire and all kinds of anguish will madden the wretched victim: "*This place of torments*" (ST. LUKE xvi. 28). Suffering seems to us unbearable even when it is not severe: what must that state be where every sort of suffering has to be endured!

POINT II.— The pains of hell in their **severity are without measure.** It is God Himself Who punishes, the Almighty One, Who is provoked to wrath and in hell is exerting His power to show it. What then will the punishment be? Compared with the fire of hell, natural fire is only like painted flame; all the ills of life, compared with those of hell, are but a shadow, a mere nothing. Such sufferings have I deserved; is there anything in them which should appear unduly harsh to me? Ought not I to be thankful that God has in His mercy spared me?

POINT III.— The pains of hell in their **bitterness are without solace.** A lost soul never will find any consolation, either in God, or in creatures, or in itself. Truly the pleasure of a moment is dearly bought.

POINT IV.— The pains of hell in their **duration will be eternal.** After the lapse of as many millions of years as there are drops of water in the sea, hell and its torments will begin anew. Eternity will remain undiminished. Oh eternity! Could we but conceive what thou art! If we use our every effort to avoid some passing evil, what should we do in order to escape from one which will never end?

Friday.

THREE THOUGHTS OF A LOST SOUL ON ENTERING HELL.

POINT I.— The first thought of a lost soul, on entering hell and beholding that dreadful prison and those devouring flames and on first feeling those terrible torments, will be: **I am lost.** Alas! the end has come; now is there no longer any good, or pleasure, or society for me; here am I overburdened with all imaginable ills in soul and body. Sadness, pain, rage, despair, are the outcome of this thought.

Point II.— Second thought: I am lost, **and for all eternity.** My sufferings are now beginning, but they will never end. After thousands of millions of years, my eternity will still remain for me unchanged, and my torments will be as new and as unbearable as they are at this present moment. Oh hell! oh eternity! had I thought seriously of them before! but now it is too late!

Point III.— Third thought: I am lost for ever and **through my own fault.** I knew, I was quite sure, that there was a hell and an everlasting hell; that mortal sin led to it; that penance would have to be done after having committed it. I had innumerable means and opportunities of doing penance for my sin. These means, these opportunities, I have lost and have wasted the time given me for making reparation for my sins and forestalling my impending doom. Oh rueful thought that the time has gone by for ever! Let us save ourselves from this misery, let us flee from sin, let us abandon it if we have fallen into it, and, in order to rouse ourselves to do this, let us think of hell and tremble at the thought of so woeful an eternity.

Saturday.

ON THE PRODIGAL SON.

POINT I.— The youthful prodigal **foolishly left his father's house,** where he was living in the midst of abundance. After having dissipated his fortune in riotous living, he was reduced to utmost misery, obliged to hire himself out to a hard master, to look after unclean animals and to sustain himself by eating of their food, nor had he enough even of that to satisfy his hunger. This is what happens to us when we leave God, our true Father, in order to follow our disorderly inclinations; shame, poverty, misery punish us, and richly do we deserve them.

POINT II.— In his misery this young man **returns to a better mind.** he feels all his wretchedness, wishes to escape from it and to return to his father; desires to do this at all cost; hurries to throw himself at his father's feet and to ask for his forgiveness. We often find that we have neither pleasure nor rest amid the lukewarmness which holds us aloof from God; grace urges us to return to Him, but human respect keeps us back. We must conquer this, and say generously: *"I will arise, and will go to my Father"* (ST. LUKE xv. 18). Nothing shall keep me back; I am coming to Thee once more, O my God and Father!

POINT III.— The father of the young prodigal is **touched with compassion**; he goes forth to meet him; clothes him richly to save him from shame; embraces his son, restores him to his home, makes a great feast and desires to be congratulated on the return of his child. In the conduct of this father, let us admire God's behavior with respect to ourselves, throw ourselves full of trust at His feet and with a firm purpose nevermore to leave Him.

Third Sunday in Lent.

ON THE EVILS DIVISION CAUSES IN A COMMUNITY.

"*Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate*" (ST. MATT. xii. 25).

POINT I.— It is impossible for any Community to continue to exist if its members become disunited. **Union gives it its harmony,** strength and vigor; division exposes it to attacks from without and renders it incapable of self-defense. If a religious body have increased and become worthy of esteem, if it have borne up against violent attacks, if it have appeared terrible to the enemies of the Church, union amongst its members has produced results so great. If this union were to be wanting, there would be everything to fear: "*They are divided, they shall perish.*"

POINT II.— Division in a body **separates it from God.** Jesus Christ does not continue to acknowledge as His own those who do not preserve the peace and union which He has given them as marks of being His disciples and His children. He does not want the services of such; the offering they make of themselves is an abomination to Him. We cannot be united with Him if we are not united among ourselves.

POINT III.— Peace, happiness, holiness and salvation are the blessings which those consecrated to God expected to possess, when they chose their state of life. We shall not find any of these blessings if there be division amongst us; but only bitterness, sorrow, sin and perdition. **Without peace and union religious houses are but a hell,** and they who dwell there are lost. Let us take alarm at this saying. It is St. Bernard's own.

Monday.

"Physician, heal thyself" (ST. LUKE iv. 23).

POINT I.— Of what use were it to a laborer in Christ's Church to win the whole world to God, if he came to lose his own soul? What a misery would it be to have labored to fill the Church with saints and heaven with elect, were he himself neither holy nor amongst the saved? Well-regulated zeal demands that he should begin his **work of conversion by converting himself:** *"Save thine own soul."*

POINT II.— The true way to heal others is **to be free from the evils we seek to cure.** The holiness of a true worker of God is the most excellent means of sanctifying others. We should know how to hold converse with God, so as to learn what we ought to say; we should pray to Him in order to draw down upon others the graces and blessings needful to save them.

POINT III.— To work for souls, to preach in the pulpit and direct in the confessional and not to do ourselves what we enjoin others to do, is **to lay ourselves open to the contempt** of those whom we fail to edify: "*They say and do not*" (ST. MATT. xxiii. 3). We bring on ourselves reproaches of conscience and render our ruin inexcusable before God, inasmuch as we tell people that they ought to do what we ourselves fail in doing. "*Wicked servant,*" Our Lord will say to us, "*out of thy own mouth I judge thee*" (ST. LUKE xix. 22). Let us fear all these evils, and, in order to render our labor fruitful, let us begin by working for ourselves.

Tuesday.

ON BROTHERLY CORRECTION.

POINT I.— God has laid on us the indispensable obligation of **laboring for the salvation of our neighbor** in correcting his shortcomings, either in person, if we hope to be able to rebuke him successfully, or by means of those whom God has chosen for his guidance. Not to heal another when we are able to do so is equivalent to depriving him of life; and God will call us to account for those who, through our fault, shall have been lost: *"Life for life."* How are we fulfilling this obligation, so important to ourselves and of such moment to others?

POINT II.— **To succeed in fraternal correction,** it should be given prudently and under circumstances calculated to render it advantageous; it should be accomplished by love and condescension that it may become acceptable and by earnestness and zeal that it may prove salutary. Indiscretion, antipathy and temporizing will deprive these remedies of all their virtue and change them into poison. Let us study how to apply them efficiently.

POINT III.— **To profit aright by the correction** which others are kind enough to give us, we should receive it humbly, convinced that we have deserved it; and gratefully, feeling obliged to those who have done us this good service. Let us profit by their kindly admonitions. If some one tells us we have a black spot on our face, we thank him and straightway remove it. Let us do the same with regard to the faults about which others warn us.

Wednesday.

"From the heart come forth evil thoughts"
(ST. MATT. xv. 19).

POINT I.— Evil thoughts are sins in the case of the wicked who take pleasure in them; but, as regards the good who hate them, try to resist them and drive them away, they are so **many opportunities for gaining glorious victories** and storing up merit. The greatest saints are not exempt from such troublesome conflicts. We should not be distressed, but struggle vigorously and not grow weary.

Point II.— The **depravity of our heart,** corrupted by the sin of our first parents, is a **chief source** of such thoughts. This is the soil which grows only thorns and thistles. Such thoughts proceed from the objects that present themselves to our senses, by what we see or hear; they arise also from suggestion of the devil. Let us be faithful to the grace which stirs our hearts; let us watch strictly over our senses, and all the efforts of the devil will be in vain.

Point III.— The **remedies** for such vexatious trouble are thoughts of our last end, and of the presence of God, Who sees all that takes place in mind and heart; prayer; the reading of good books supplying holy reflections; the custody of the senses; occupation, which keeps away idleness and evil thoughts; detachment from the world, and the love of God. We shall think only of Him, if we have no other love: *"Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also"* (St. Matt. vi. 21).

Thursday.

On Sickness.

"*Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever*" (St. Luke iv. 38).

Point I.— God sends sickness **to punish our sins,** make us gain merit by patience and give us a distaste for the world. Nothing contents us when we are out of health. He also sends illness that we may have recourse to Him and may recognize that health and sickness alike are in His hands. Let us adore these designs of God amid our troubles; and since we teach others to submit to the arrangements of Providence, let us submit to them ourselves.

Point II.— They **besought Our Lord to restore her to health.** He is glad that we should wish to be cured and should make use of remedies; but He desires especially that we apply to Him with confidence. Let us then say, in order to rouse ourselves to do this: God knows my disease, He has power to remove it, He loves me as the best of fathers, He will do what He thinks good for me.

Point III.— The sick woman **when healed ministered gratefully to Jesus** and His disciples, who had done her the honor to visit her. Let us use the health and strength we have received from God for His service; let us do good works; produce acts of virtue; pray while we are in good health: in sickness we cannot even understand what is best to do, much less do it.

Friday.

WE MUST LIVE IN THE SPIRIT.

"*They that adore God, must adore Him in spirit and in truth*" (ST. JOHN iv. 24).

POINT I.— To live in the spirit is to **judge of things by the principles of faith** and according to the laws of eternity: *ad regulas æternitatis.* To value what God values, despise what He despises, consider all things with relation to God and to our last end; these are our rules and our maxims. The world lives according to its laws, let us live according to ours.

POINT II.— To live in the spirit is to **love things supernatural,** God, Paradise, virtue. These alone deserve to be loved. Let the affections of our heart be directed to this end; let us give expression to these sentiments by ejaculatory prayers. Can we be occupied in a manner more saintly or meritorious?

POINT III.— To live in the spirit is to have all **our actions inspired by a holy intention,** referring them all to God and to eternity. A moment of such life procures eternal happiness. The longest life lived otherwise is profitless for heaven. Alas! how much of our time have we squandered! In order not to lose any more, let us "*live in the Spirit. Let us also walk in the Spirit*" (GAL. v. 25).

Saturday.

ON MORTAL SIN.

"He that is without sin among you, etc."
(ST. JOHN viii. 7).

POINT I.— Mortal sin in a soul is an **incredible abomination.** It drives out the grace of the Holy Spirit, profanes the temple of God and introduces into it the devil, who makes himself master. Let us detest all sins of our past life. Let us pity the many sinners oppressed by the weight of sin and pray for them.

POINT II.— Mortal sin in a soul causes **unutterable desolation.** It takes away the friendship of God, the merits of our past life and those of the good works performed while in this state and deprives us of heaven. It exposes the soul to numberless evils in this life and to an eternity of misery. What folly to lose so many blessings, and expose ourselves to so many evils for the brief pleasure of a moment!

POINT III.— Though we may be consecrated to God, we are **not** for all that **impeccable.** We may fall into grievous sins and should do so were God not to restrain us by His grace. Let us pray to Him most earnestly for such help; fear sin as the greatest of evils; avoid the occasions of sin and break from the attachments which may lead us into it. *"Who is on his guard against these things, is on his guard against sin,"* says St. Bernard.

The Fourth Sunday in Lent.

ON THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES.

POINT I.— Our Blessed Redeemer **thinks of the needs** of the people who follow Him; He is touched with compassion; wishes to provide for them; performs a miracle in order to prevent them from suffering hunger. Is He not a Master worthy of being followed?

POINT II.— **Every day He renews the** well-known **miracle** of the multiplication of the loaves. He feeds all men. He causes the fruit of the earth to grow and to ripen for them; He provides for all — *"even with delicacies."* Few there are who bear in mind the admirable care of this good Father; few thank Him for it; many use His gifts against Himself to offend Him. Let us avoid these faults.

POINT III.— The multitude followed Our Lord into the desert without thinking of taking with them what was necessary, persuaded that in company of this Divine Master nothing would be wanting to them. Let us **follow Him with similar**, and even with still greater, **confidence**; for we possess the experience of the past, which these people had not. He said to His disciples: *"When I sent you forth unprovided, had you need of anything?"* Each of us can say that, since he has been in the service of so worthy a Master, far from having need of anything, he is better off than he would have been in the service of the world and the devil.

Monday.

"Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple"
(St. Matt. xxi. 12).

Point I.— Our Blessed Savior never entered Jerusalem without going to the temple, in order to teach us to frequent the house of prayer — the Church.

It is a place of **consolation.** In our difficulties, afflictions and desolations, we shall find true consolation only in the house of prayer, at the foot of the crucifix, before the altar, where we can lay open to God the bitterness of our heart, which He will sweeten with His grace. All other consolation is in vain.

Point II.— It is a place of **propitiation,** When we have offended God and when, through fear of His judgment, our conscience reproaches us with having done so, we must go to the house of prayer to entreat forgiveness and by true contrition to appease the anger of God.

Point III.— It is a place of **illumination.** It is there that God enlightens our mind with His grace and discloses to us what we should do in order to acquire the virtues of our state of life and to make sure of that most urgent of all matters, our eternal salvation.

Tuesday.

"My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me" (St. John viii. 16).

Point I.— St. Paul, the faithful interpreter of Our Savior's words, reduced the whole Gospel teaching to three heads. The first is to **drive out** of our minds all that **irreligion which separates us from God** and to banish from our heart the desire of things that pass away with time and hinder us from acquiring those of heaven, *"denying ungodliness and worldly desires"* (Titus ii. 12). Let us examine mind and heart, that we may see if there be not there some principle opposed to the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Point II.— The second leading point in the evangelical doctrine is to **fulfill our duty towards God, towards our neighbor** and **towards ourselves**: *"We should live soberly and justly and godly in this world."* We should be modest and temperate in our behavior, just and charitable to our neighbor, devout and obedient to God our Father, and that despite the pernicious examples met with in our time: *in hoc sæculo.* Were we to fulfill these duties, we should be perfect Christians.

Point III.— The third matter which Our Savior enjoins is to have our life animated with the **hope of eternal happiness,** which God will bestow on our souls when we die and on our bodies when He comes to judge the world: *"Looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of* *the great God."* It is this hope, founded on the promises and the faithfulness of God, which should console the Christian in this life, should detach him from the world and encourage him to keep God's law.

Wednesday.

OUR LORD CURES THE MAN WHO WAS BORN BLIND.

POINT I.— Delivered from the blindness which ruins the vast majority of worldlings, let us declare ourselves to be **disciples of Our Lord** and invite others to do the like, even as the blind man in the gospel did after his cure. We must acknowledge Jesus as our Protector, our Captain, our Sovereign Lord and our Master, *"in heart, word and deed";* inwardly believing Him to be such, confessing Him with our mouth, honoring Him by our behavior, professing his doctrine and practicing it.

POINT II.— The enemies of Our Savior loaded the blind man whose sight was restored with abuse, when he spoke to them of his benefactor. *"They reviled Him."* It is the fate of the good to be exposed to the raillery, censure and bad treatment of the wicked, but this should not discourage us. They did not spare the Master and will not show more respect to the disciples. We are happy in having to suffer in so good a cause.

POINT III.— If the wicked declare themselves to be against the disciples of Our Savior, **He will declare Himself on their side**: *"I will also confess him"* (ST. MATT. x. 32). During life He will cause them to be honored; at the judgment He will make known that they have deserved to be called His true disciples, and He will place a crown of glory on their head. He will confound those who despised them. Let us declare to Him generously that we wish the whole world to know that He is our Master: *"Let all the earth know that Thou art the Lord our God."*

Thursday.

THREE TRUTHS CONCERNING DEATH.

"A dead man was carried out" (ST. LUKE vii. 12).

POINT I.— **We must die.** This is a sentence pronounced by God Himself: *"It is ordained."* Reason and experience would convince us of this, even if faith did not teach it. Let us submit to God's decree. Let us accept death in obedience to Him, that we may undergo the penalty we have merited and be like Jesus Christ Who chose to die for us. Let us look at the world now as we shall regard it then; let us wean our heart from everything that death will take away; let us bind ourselves to God, Who will receive us at the moment of death.

POINT II.— We must **die a good death.** A person dies but once; in death errors are irreparable. An unhappy death deprives us of infinite good and lands us in everlasting misery. A good death saves us from the pains of hell, which will endure for ever, and gives possession of an immense blessing which will never end: *"A moment on which Eternity hangs."* Everything is won if we die well, and everything is lost if we die badly.

POINT III.—**In order to die well we must live well.** It is generally said that as we are in life, so shall we be in death, and this is most true. The actions of life, the habits which have been contracted and the just providence of an infinitely just God bring about this correspondence between life and death. We wish to die a good death; in order that we may do so, let us employ this infallible and necessary means; let us live a holy life.

Friday.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOD.

"Lazarus, our friend, sleepeth" (ST. JOHN xi. 11).

POINT I.—Our Lord **loved Lazarus** during his life, at his last illness and after his death. **His friendship was constant, sincere, disinterested.** We shall never find anything like it among men, whose friendship consists in words—*"friends who speak windy words,"* Job calls them (xvi. 3). Their friendship is selfish, inasmuch as they often love us only for their own interest; it is inconstant, for they who love us sometimes cease to do so, even when we have afforded them no cause whatever to leave off caring for us. Let us confess that God alone deserves the name of Friend and that His friendship alone should be sought for with eagerness.

POINT II.—**If we desire it, we shall be the friends of God:** *"If I desire to be a friend of God, lo! already I am one"* (ST. AUGUSTINE). The great ones of the world and the rich would reject my friendship on account of my lowliness or my poverty; but God will give me His, even if I am the poorest and most wretched of men. When I possess His friendship, I have nothing to fear; there will be no thoughtlessness, no inconstancy on His part. He will never break off His friendship with me, unless I first break it off with Him, and even then He will do so sorrowfully. What a consolation for me!

POINT III.—Since God alone is a true friend, **He should be preferred to all others:** *"Who is like God?"* should we say. Neither human respect, nor complaisance, nor self-interest ought to cause me to fail in what such friendship demands. Where is it possible to find a friendship more glorious than His, pleasanter or more advantageous during life, at the moment of death, or throughout eternity? What folly would it be to sacrifice it in order to please some creature!

Saturday.

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (ST. JOHN viii. 12).

POINT I.— The first blessing Our Savior imparts to us is **His doctrine.** The world was wrapped in dreadful darkness concerning God and the future life. Jesus scattered this darkness and taught truth to the world by His solid, sure and divine doctrine. He instructed the world Himself during His life on earth and, after His death, through His gospel. Let us thank God for having brought us into the broad daylight of faith and for having preserved us from the evils of infidelity and error.

POINT II.— The second benefit is the **example He has given** us. Doctrine seems worthy of suspicion if he who teaches it does not himself practice it. Our Savior has given us an example of every virtue and of greatest holiness. He has practiced what He taught: *"Leaving you an example"* (1 ST. PETER ii. 21). It is a great happiness to be able to imitate the example of a God-Man, but it is a great evil not to adhere to it.

POINT III.— The third blessing is **interior grace,** that we may live according to Our Lord's teaching and imitate His example. Without such grace, all else is useless; with it, we live a supernatural life and are advancing towards the full light of eternity: *"He shall have the light of life"* (ST. JOHN viii. 12). These graces are precious. God bestows them upon us liberally; He expects us to profit by them, and He punishes those who abuse them.

Passion Sunday.

"Which of you shall convince me of sin?" (St. John viii. 46).

Point I.— **One consecrated to God** should, after the example of Our Savior, **strive to be without sin,** since, if he commit it, his faults are more grievous than those of persons in the world. He has greater graces to enable him to avoid sin, is removed from the occasions of it, has before him the example of the good and is in a state of holiness: *"In the land of the saints he has done wicked things, and he shall not see the glory of the Lord"* (Isaias xxvi. 10). He should be afraid of this terrible punishment.

Point II.— The sins of a Religious are more grievous, because they **bring harm to religion.** He occupies a place which some one else would fill usefully. He brings religion into disrepute if his disorders become known; he draws down serious evils upon it, and the innocent often suffer for the sins of the faulty. Such is the recompense this good mother receives after having cherished and brought up carefully such unnatural children.

Point III.— The sins of a Religous are more grievous in regard **to God, Whom he offends.** He belongs in an especial manner to God, as His avowed servant, His disciple, nay, His own son. He has by his profession consecrated himself to God, yet he abandons Him, displeases Him and yields himself to God's enemy renouncing his duty and breaking his solemn engagement. What an outrage is this! What punishment does not one deserve who with full deliberation acts thus! *"If mine enemy had reviled Me, I would verily have borne it, but thou!"* (Ps. liv. 13). Let us try to understand the force of this reproach, that we may resolve never to incur it.

Monday.

"If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink" (St. John vii. 37).

Point I.—Jesus Christ promised the water of grace to mankind, while the priests, by offering the water of Siloe to the people, were reviving belief in the coming of the Messias Whom all were expecting. The water of grace **washes away all impurity** and gives real and permanent beauty. Let us apply to this Divine Messias, and beg Him to purify us from the sins which defile the soul: *"Wash me yet more"* (Psalm l. 4).

Point II.—The second effect of the water of grace is to make us **put forth all kinds of good fruits.** Holy actions, good works, virtues and holiness are the fruits which our soul when thus watered produces for the glory of God: *"He shall be like a watered garden,"* said the prophet (Is. lviii. 2).

POINT III.—The third effect of this water is **to quench our thirst.** It removes from us the craving for the pleasures and riches of the world, which were wont to absorb all our thoughts; it satisfies our longings for supernatural blessings, for our sanctification and for the possession of God; it loads us with all these supreme advantages. Let us look to our Redeemer on the Cross and at His Wounds, as the fruitful source from which flow the healing waters to wash away our sins, cause our virtues to increase and detach our soul from everything that is not God: *"You shall draw waters with joy out of the Savior's fountain"* (ISAIAS xii. 3).

Tuesday.

"Some said: He is a good man. And others said: No" (ST. JOHN vii. 12).

POINT I.—Let us consider here, in the case of Our Savior, how **unjust are the judgments of men.** They value what they should despise, and they despise what they ought to value. Men generally judge from passion, ignorance, envy, or self-interest: they consider appearances only, and not the truth. Far otherwise doth God judge; He knows things as they really are, and He values what is worthy of esteem. Let us seek the approval of God and despise that of men.

Point II.—The **esteem of men is useless**; they can neither injure nor serve us much, they cannot even, as our Blessed Lord says, change the color of one hair of our head. The esteem of God, on the contrary, is the source of our eternal and temporal happiness. It is folly to seek after the praise of men while losing that of God.

Point III.—However great may be the esteem we attain to in the minds of men, it is vain, since **it passes away in a moment.** A little thing causes us to lose it; last as it may, it ends with our life, and then we are clean forgotten. God's favor will last as long as God Himself. Vanity of vanities to seek any other esteem!

Wednesday.

"I know Mine" (St. John x. 14).

Point I.—Consider what great **happiness it is to be of the number of Our Lord's sheep,** that is, of His elect. He knows them with a knowledge of complacency; He loves them and does everything for them; He protects them; not one shall perish; their names are written in the Book of Life. What a happiness! If I only knew myself to be of that number—I often say to myself—I should despise the world and detach myself from everything. I should love God alone and desire Him exclusively. Do what you say, do it always, and then you are one of the elect.

POINT II.— **Christ's sheep hear His voice** with docility when **He speaks to them** through the Scripture, His graces and example; **and do faithfully what He requires from them.** This is the surest sign that we are among Our Savior's sheep. Fervor, devotion, patience, charity, the good use of the Sacraments, devotion to the Blessed Virgin are also signs of predestination; do I recognize them in myself?

POINT III.— God created me, He waited for me after my offending Him. He has pardoned all my sins and placed me in a state of holiness. How many motives are thus afforded me for trusting that **He will complete His work!** I, too, must labor for this end. Often have I been lacking in due correspondence — a thing that may happen again. This should keep my confidence within proper limits.

Thursday.

ON THE TEARS OF MARY MAGDALENE.

POINT I.— **The tears of Mary Magdalene are sincere.** They proceed from the knowledge of her sinfulness. They are accompanied by shame and sorrow and will last as long as her life may last. We have offended God; have we real sorrow for our sins?

Point II.—**Her tears are generous.** She overcomes all difficulties that might hinder her conversion; triumphs over human respect, shame and her habits of sin; makes the sacrifice of all the objects of her past shame and breaks the bonds which attach her to the world. What effort have we made to correct our failings?

Point III.—**Her tears are efficacious.** They have obtained her forgiveness; have changed her heart; have served as an example to a multitude of sinners. Let us profit by her example, beseeching God for complete conversion and for perseverance in His Holy love.

Friday.

"*It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people*" (St. John xi. 50).

Point I.—Let us consider the **pitiable state** to which we were **reduced by sin.** We were burdened with sin, added to the original sin which involved us all in a common guilt; of ourselves we were incapable of escaping from this condition. All the satisfaction men might offer could not wipe away a single sin, so that we should have been irretrievably lost had God left us to ourselves. Let us admit the greatness of the evil and the extreme need of a remedy.

Point II.—**Jesus Christ had pity** on us. He took our sins upon Himself and promised to make satisfaction for us. For this end He underwent the labors of His Life and bore the shame of His Death. His Father accepted this satisfaction for our sins; He has promised us forgiveness if we receive what His Son has given for us. Let us thank our loving Savior for His infinite charity; let us love Him Who died in order to prevent our perdition. Let us rouse ourselves to contrition.

POINT III.— The **Sufferings and Death of Our Savior should comfort** us when the remembrance of our sins troubles us. Is there any ill so great that it cannot be healed by so powerful a remedy? Let us have confidence that our past sins are pardoned, since our conscience gives testimony that we have detested and confessed them; let us hope for the forgiveness of sins recently committed, by virtue of the Death and the Blood of our Redeemer; let us be assured that, strengthened by the graces He has merited for us, we shall avoid the sins we might have committed in the future.

Saturday.

"*A great multitude . . . took branches of palm-trees and went forth to meet Him and cried: Hosanna, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord*" (ST. JOHN xii. 12, 13).

POINT I.— Our Savior wishes to make His entry into Jerusalem with pomp and demonstrations of joy, to teach us that, if **He was to be put to death,** it was because **He willed it Himself;** for, had He wished, He could have changed these deicides into worshipers. If He was taken bound, ill-treated and fastened to a Cross, it was because He desired it all and, from love of us, with all His Heart.

Point II.— He chose to enter the city in triumph, in order to render the **ignominy of His Passion greater and more publicly known.** By His triumph He became better known to every one, and this notoriety served to increase the infamy of His torment. Our Savior omitted nothing which could render His sorrow more bitter and His ignominy greater; yet how difficult we find it to bear with the slightest contempt!

Point III.— He chose to enter in triumph, in order to **undeceive us as to worldly praises and applause.** Those who receive Him as King of Israel, as the Messias, will in a few days cause Him to be put to death as a malefactor. Who would not fear the inconstancy of men? Who would dare trust to the favor of the world?

Palm Sunday.

"Behold thy King cometh to thee meek"
(St. Matt. xxi. 5).

Point I.— **Jesus Christ is our king;** but He is a king Who is infinitely wise, good, rich, liberal, just, merciful, mighty, immortal: *"Thy King."*

He is so by every kind of title. He has all power over us and can use that power according to His good pleasure. Let us rejoice that we are under rule of so perfect a king; and, in order to persuade ourselves to render Him the respect, obedience and service which His dignity demands, let us consider with what exactness we should fulfill such duties towards an earthly monarch, though mortal like ourselves.

POINT II.— **He comes for our sake:** *"Cometh to thee."* He comes to rescue us from slavery, to guard, protect and rule us. All He does is for our sake and not in His own interest. Other rulers at times exact from their subjects ruinous taxes; impoverish them in order to enrich themselves; risk the lives of their subjects to preserve their own and in order to acquire glory; impose on them harsh laws. Jesus Christ, our King, makes Himself poor that He may enrich us; He gives His life for us; He imposes no law which He does not Himself observe. Is it possible not to love so good a king?

POINT III.— **Clemency and gentleness accompany Him in everything:** *"meek."* Let us admire this gentleness as regards all kinds of persons. Let us learn from Him to practice this virtue: *"Learn of Me, because I am meek"* (ST. MATT. xi. 29). Such gentleness will keep in check our hastiness, anger and indiscreet zeal.

Monday.

ON THE PURPOSE WHICH OUR SAVIOR HAD IN HIS PASSION AND HIS DEATH.

POINT I.— **He suffered for the glory of His Father,** making reparation by His Death for the outrage His Father had received through sin and offering in reparation the most august Sacrifice that ever was, or ever could be, offered. In our sufferings we glorify God through our patience, submission to His commands and love for Him.

POINT II.— **He suffered in order to make expiation for our sins.** He had taken them upon Himself, and He gave His Blood to wash them away. By our sufferings, united to those of Jesus Christ, we pay to God's justice the penalty we have deserved for our sins and which we must suffer in this life or in the next.

POINT III.— **He suffered to give us an example,** says St. Peter: *"leaving you an example that you should follow His steps"* (1 ST. PETER ii. 21). He was the first to walk in this rough road, He drained the chalice to the dregs in order to induce us to drink thereof. In our sufferings, we have a consolation which can throughout sweeten them, namely, that by this means we become as the first-born among the elect.

POINT IV.— **He suffered in order to obtain** by a new title **the glory of Paradise:** *"And so to enter into His glory"* (ST. LUKE xxiv. 26).

This thought will take away all bitterness from our sufferings. A moment of affliction and pain may merit for me an eternity of bliss.

Tuesday.

ON THE VIRTUES PRACTICED BY OUR LORD IN HIS PASSION.

POINT I.— With regard to His Father, He shows entire **submission to His commands**: *"Not as I will, but as Thou wilt"* (ST. MATT. xxvi. 39); a burning charity, an earnest desire to glorify God, offering up a sacrifice worthy of Him, and complete confidence in His Father's paternal tenderness, committing His soul into His hands. We can, and ought, to imitate Our Savior by practicing the like virtues amid our sufferings, in the fear of death, on its approach.

POINT II.— As regards men, for whom He died, He showed tender **compassion, amazing love** and **astonishing zeal for their salvation,** even so far as to desire further torments and another and still more cruel death, if necessary, in order to save them. *Sitio,* He said; *"I thirst,"*— for souls, that is. Let us say with St. Paul, if any man love not a God Who has loved him to excess, *"let him be anathema."* We should, in imitation of Our Savior, cherish compassion, charity, and zeal for our neighbor.

POINT III.— He showed astounding **humility**—*"He emptied out Himself,"*— invincible

patience, admirable **gentleness.** He was like a lamb, as the Prophet says, which lets itself be slaughtered without complaining; it was an obedience without parallel. *"Look and make it according to the pattern"* (EXOD. xxv. 40). Let us imitate Him Who chose to be our pattern.

Wednesday.

ON THE EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR SUFFERINGS OF JESUS CHRIST IN HIS PASSION.

POINT I.—Let us follow Our Savior suffering for us, and, in order that we may sympathize with His sorrows, let us be mindful that **He suffers:** first, **from all kinds of persons,** from kings and the people, from priests and lay people, from Jews and Romans, from soldiers, executioners, nay, from His very disciples; secondly, **He suffers in all parts of His body;** from His head crowned with thorns, to His feet pierced with nails; thirdly, **He suffers all kinds of tortures,** the scourges, thorns, nails, Cross, Death itself. Let us try to imagine the severity of His Passion and the heinousness of the sins which caused it.

POINT II.—These torments were deeply felt by our Blessed Savior, but **His inner sufferings were far more painful.** First, His soul endured sadness, weariness, fear, dejection, abandonment and deprived itself of all interior consolation. Secondly, He suffered all it is possible to suffer as to honor. He was sold ignominiously, taken and bound as a highway robber, beaten like a slave, crowned with thorns as having dealings with the devil, fastened to a cross as a blasphemer, and that, too, on a solemn feast, in presence of vast crowds, who were to publish throughout the world the ignominy of His Death. Thirdly, they sat in judgment upon Him, condemned Him in His teaching, in His disciples, His miracles, His life, and they insulted Him in His Death. Does He not rightly bear the name of the Man of Sorrows? Does He not severely expiate our guilty pleasures and our foolish joys?

Thursday.

ON THE INSTITUTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

POINT I.—Our Blessed Lord **at the close of His life loves us more than ever.** He is about to return to His Father, but He wishes to remain with us; His wisdom discovers to Him the means, and love leads Him to employ them. At the time when men are preparing to make Him feel the effects of the most deadly hatred, He gives them proof of the **most ardent love** that can burn in the human heart. He gives Himself through love, and He does this in order that He may unite Himself to us in the tenderest manner. After having wondered at all that took place in this mysterious Sacrament, let us thank Our Lord for so overwhelming a proof of His love.

POINT II.— Before giving His body as a Sacrifice upon the Cross, He immolates it in the Eucharist and, abolishing the other sacrifices, **He institutes the Sacrifice of His Body** and of His blood, **to be a perpetual holocaust** on our altars, to be the propitiatory and eucharistic Sacrifice of impetration for Christians until the world ends. Let us offer it to God with the reverence, tenderness and devotion it demands.

POINT III.— He institutes the Eucharist as a **Sacrifice to honor God** and as a **Sacrament to sanctify us.** It is thus that, uniting Himself with His faithful ones, He loads them with graces, lights, favors and consolations; He wishes to be a pledge to them of their resurrection and of their eternal happiness. Let us profit by this amazing boon and by the loving intention of Him from Whom we receive it.

Friday.

ON THREE SUBJECTS FOR ADMIRATION AND AMAZEMENT IN THE PASSION OF OUR SAVIOR.

POINT I.— The first cause for wonderment is to witness the **extreme anger of a Father with his Son.** God treats His Son with utmost rigor. His only, beloved, innocent Son, a Son

Who begs His Father to spare Him from death, Who prays to Him tenderly, Who has already suffered the scourge and the thorns, shame and confusion — God refuses Him what He asks and chooses that He should die by a death shameful and cruel, and this for a miserable slave. Awful justice of God! What will become of me should I fall into its power?

POINT II.— The second cause for wonder is to behold the **love of a God for men who were the cause of His Death.** It is a tender disinterested, generous and constant love. He has shown it towards them by making Himself Man and abiding with men; He has shown it in His Passion and His Death, wishing them to pierce His side that He might pour out what remained of His Blood and open to us a portal by which we might enter. *"If any man love not Our Lord, let him be anathema"* (I COR. xvi. 22). Let him be considered as a Jew, or as one excommunicated.

POINT III.— The third cause for surprise is the **ingratitude of men.** The Jews are the first to be guilty of this ingratitude, after having been loaded with blessings by God. Next come those who cease not to offend Christ and renew the causes of His Death — all those who will not profit by His graces, all those who will not suffer anything for Him.

Saturday.

ON THE BURIAL OF OUR LORD.

POINT I.— Jesus Christ had expired on the Cross. Then they took down His sacred Body, and His Holy Mother, overwhelmed with grief, received it in her arms. **Let us share in the sorrow of the Queen of Martyrs,** and, at sight of this Body covered with blood, let us with heartfelt contrition detest our sins which have brought Him to this state.

POINT II.— Some of Our Savior's disciples and the devout women anointed His sacred Body and laid it in the sepulchre. **Remember,** says St. Paul, **that you are dead** and that your former life is hid with Jesus in the tomb; everything belonging to the old man should be enclosed there — sensuality, anger and attachment to the things of earth,— that we may rise again with Our Savior to a new life. If we have followed this advice of the Apostle, our Lent will have been a profitable one.

POINT III.— **The Body of Our Savior was in the tomb, and His Holy Soul went to Limbus,** in order to release the saints of the old law, who were awaiting their Deliverer. What must have been their joy when they saw their long-expected Messias, who came to withdraw them from the shadows of death and conduct them to paradise! What blessings! What thanksgivings! Let us ask our Divine Redeemer to remove from us whatever is connected with sin and death, that we may be prepared to follow Him in a new life of grace and holiness.

Easter Day.

Point I.— Let us consider our **Blessed Redeemer resplendent with glory** after His Resurrection. Let us renew our faith in this mystery, which is the foundation of our religion; for *"our faith is vain, if Jesus Christ be not risen,"* writes St Paul. Let us adore Him after the victory He has just gained over the devil and over death. Let us share in His joy, after having felt so deeply the sorrows of His Death.

Point II.— Let us consider the **liberality of God in rewarding His Son** and compensating for the losses He had borne. For the sufferings for some hours, for the shame of His Passion, for the Death He suffered on the Cross, He loads Jesus with infinite joy, with glory which will endure for ever and gives Him a life which is immortal. Let us encourage ourselves to toil and suffer for a God Who is so mighty, so faithful and so magnificent in His rewards.

Point III.— The **Resurrection** of Our Savior **is a sure pledge of our own.** *"If Jesus Christ is risen again, we also shall rise again,"* says St. Paul. Let us rejoice in this hope. His Resurrection should moreover be the model for our spiritual resurrection. It is speedy, real and for evermore. Let us thus rise again to the spiritual life of grace, after being dead in sin and lukewarmness.

Monday.

THE DISCIPLES GOING TO EMMAUS.

POINT I.— The risen Savior joins these two disciples, who were conversing about His death, who were **troubled and needed solace** and strength in order to resist the unbelieving thoughts which arose in their minds. Our Lord comforts them, fills them with joy and fervor, enlightens their minds and revives their shaken faith. He produces the same effects in us on like occasions. Let us profit by them, even as the two disciples did.

POINT II.— Our Blessed Lord appeared as a stranger and traveler, in order to teach us this important truth, that **we are pilgrims and strangers** on earth, where we are only passers-by on the way to the heavenly Jerusalem, which is our fatherland, where we have our home and inheritance and where our relatives are awaiting us. Let us consider ourselves as strangers in this world, and we shall become perfect Christians.

POINT III.— **A traveler** does not attach himself to the country he merely passes through; he **sighs after his dear native land,** where he has many possessions, and, in order to arrive there quickly, never halts in his journey. We are strangers and travelers in this world and should not attach ourselves to it; we should yearn unceasingly to reach Heaven, our true country; we should labor constantly in order to arrive there. Are we doing this?

Tuesday.

ON THE PEACE WHICH OUR LORD GAVE TO HIS DISCIPLES.

"*Peace be to you*" (ST. LUKE xxiv. 36).

POINT I.— **Our Lord wishes us to have this peace in ourselves** and enjoy the comfort of a good conscience, whereby the Holy Spirit and His grace console us. In order to possess such peace, we must put away every kind of sin filling us with trouble and bitterness.

POINT II.— **He wishes us to have peace with God**, with Whom we have been reconciled. He will on His side keep the conditions of this reconciliation; let us keep them on ours by complete faithfulness, exact obedience and perfect conformity of our will with that of God.

POINT III.— **He wishes us to have peace with our neighbor**, driving away dissensions, quarrels and aversions and putting in their stead true friendship and Christian charity. Let us search our heart to discover if there be in it any source of trouble and division.

POINT IV.— **He wishes us to desire this**

peace for others: *"Saying: Peace be to this house"* (ST. MATT. x. 12). He would have us attain this by means of a peaceable spirit, which is the source of our own happiness and which strives to render others happy also, causing them to live in union and on loving terms. Let us try to acquire this spirit, which will render us commendable alike to God and to men.

Wednesday.

ON THE APPARITION OF THE RISEN SAVIOR TO HIS HOLY MOTHER.

POINT I.—**The first person to whom Our Savior showed Himself** after His Resurrection **was His Holy Mother.** The care He took to honor her required this; the love He had for her and which she had for Him enjoined such visit. She had borne a larger part than others in the sorrows of His Passion, and more than any other she longed to see Him risen; it was fair then she should be the first to experience this joy. Let us love Our Savior, sympathise in His sufferings and long to possess Him, and we shall share in the joy of the Blessed Virgin.

POINT II.—Let us consider the greatness of this joy: *"Her spirit revived"* (GEN. xlv. 27). She recovers from her deep sorrow; **beholds her dear Son loaded with glory**; adores and embraces Him. Her soul was filled with joy, and her Son, Who is "the God of all consolation," imparted it to her abundantly. Let us congratulate our Holy Mother on her unutterable delight and ask her to share with us her spiritual solace.

POINT III.— What must have been the **joy of the Blessed Virgin,** when she saw the **blessed company that was with her Son:** St. Joseph, together with her father and mother, her relatives, her forefathers the patriarchs and all the saints of the old law, who honored her as their Queen, thanked her as their liberator and manifested to her the delight they had in seeing her and their longing to be with her in heaven. Let us share the joy of all these Saints. Let us conceive the like feelings of reverence, tenderness and gratitude towards the Blessed Virgin. Let us long to see her and ask her to obtain for us the grace to merit such happiness.

Thursday.

ON THE APPARITION OF JESUS CHRIST TO ST. PETER.

POINT I.— **St. Peter,** after having quitted the sepulchre with St. John, **withdrew into solitude,** in order to ponder over all that had happened and meditate on these great mysteries; and he prepared himself by such means for the favor his dear Master wished to confer on him. Retirement is an excellent means for drawing down graces from heaven. Our Lord appeared to him before He showed Himself to the other Apostles, just as He appeared to Mary Magdalene before He was seen by the other women. Both had sinned, and, in order to revive the confidence of sinners, He gives preference to these two over the rest.

POINT II.— Let us consider what must have been **St. Peter's confusion** when he saw Our Savior. Remembering his cowardice and sin, he threw himself at His feet, bursting into tears, confessing his fault and entreating forgiveness. Our Blessed Lord raises him up, embraces him, consoles him and fills him with joy. Let us imitate St. Peter in his contrition and in his shame and never doubt of the mercy of Jesus.

POINT III.— Our Lord **never mentioned St. Peter's sin**, either in public or private. He acted as if He had forgotten it. *"I will not remember thy sins"* (ISAIAS xliii. 25), He says to the sinner by the mouth of His prophet. St. Peter, however, never forgot it; he wept for it all his life and expiated it by severe penance. Let us imitate Our Savior by forgetting the harm others have done us. Let us imitate St. Peter by the remembrance of our sins, by contrition, by penance.

Friday.

ON OUR RESURRECTION.

POINT I.— One day our bodies will come forth from the grave and begin a new life. By our resurrection God shows that **His word is true**; He has told us of this in a number of passages; the whole Scriptures of the Old and New Testament tell the same thing. The Prophets, the Apostles, the Martyrs and the Fathers give assurance of it; the Life, Death and Resurrection of our Savior do the same still more strongly. Our Lord calls us "*the children of the resurrection*" (St. Luke xx. 36). This is the sweetest hope of Christians; it should comfort us in our sufferings and troubles, in our fear of death and in our horror of the grave.

Point II.—God will show **His almighty power** by gathering together the bones and ashes of all men who have ever existed, restoring the scattered, decayed, nay, all but annihilated bodies and reuniting them to the souls they had before. In an instant all this vast multitude will reappear and be amazed at the power of the great God.

Point III.—God will show **His justice** by giving to our bodies the reward or punishment we shall have deserved. Some will rise again clad with glory and laden with joy, to reign eternally; others will be covered with infamy and overwhelmed with sorrow, to be miserable for everlasting. Of which number shall we be? To discover this, let us examine our acts; they are the seed of our resurrection and of our eternity. "*What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap*" (Gal. vi. 8).

Saturday.

ON THE PROPERTIES OF GLORY IN THE BODY OF THE RISEN SAVIOR, WHICH SHOULD ACCOMPANY OUR LIFE.

POINT I.—The first is **impassibility,** which renders Our Savior invulnerable and places Him beyond the reach of suffering. We should imitate this by a happy insensibility to all the accidents of life, by calm of mind and peace of heart, which arise from the mortification of our desires and submission to God's commands.

POINT II.—The second of these properties is **charity,** which renders the Body of the Son of God brighter than the sun. This we shall share if our mind be filled with the spiritual light produced by grace and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and if our life give edification by exercise of the virtues of our state.

POINT III.—The third quality is **agility.** The Body of Our Savior was able to proceed in an instant from heaven to earth and from one end of the world to the other. The agility that should be perceptible in us is a wonderful promptness and fervor, leading us to execute the commands of God, to practice virtue and do everything pleasing to Him.

POINT IV.—The fourth of these qualities is **subtility,** which renders Our Savior's Body capable of penetrating without resistance the most solid substances. This signifies to us the detachment of our soul from all objects of sense and its spiritual elevation above matter, now become wholly spiritual.

If we possess these four qualities, we shall live a new life, the effect of our mystical death to the world and to sin.

Low Sunday.

ON THE WOUNDS OF JESUS CHRIST.

POINT I.— Our Blessed Lord after His Resurrection willed to retain the marks of His Wounds, that they might serve as **trophies of His glory**; *sibi ad gloriam,* says St. Bernard. They are glorious tokens of His victory over sin, death, and hell. Let us congratulate Him on this victory, let us exult over the defeat of His enemies. *"O death, where is thy victory"* (I COR. xv. 55). Let us implore Him, by His most sacred Wounds, to enable us also to triumph over His smitten foes, sin, death and hell. Let us arouse ourselves to do battle against them.

POINT II.— He retained them that they may be the **source of graces** and blessings to His disciples: *nobis ad gratiam.* In these wounds shall we find consolation in our afflictions, strength under temptations, life itself at the approach of death. Let us often say with St. Ignatius, *"Within Thy Wounds hide me."*

POINT III.— He preserved them for the **confusion of His enemies** and ours: *inimicis ad confusionem.* The Jews will behold with shame

Whom they pierced, the devils Whom they strove to vilify, unbelievers Whom they rejected, sinners Whom they crucified anew. What confusion will there be at the judgment-day, when they shall behold these sacred Wounds! And still greater will it be throughout eternity.

When at Holy Communion, let us beg Our Savior to receive us within His precious Wounds, especially that of His Sacred Heart, for therein we shall find our love, joy, strength and salvation.

Monday.

ON THE UNBELIEF OF ST. THOMAS.

POINT I.— Let us consider the **unbelief** of this Apostle, after the many assurances Our Lord had given him that He would rise again; his **indocility** in not believing what the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles and disciples told him that they had seen; his **presumption** in asking to see and to handle, to be convinced by his own experience; the **evils** to which he was exposing himself, had Jesus not taken pity on him. Let us be persuaded that we should commit still greater faults did God not sustain us; let us be afraid of obstinacy and indocility of mind; let us not be freethinkers when the things of God are in question, but be submissive to faith.

POINT II.— Let us consider the wonderful **goodness of Our Lord** towards his unbelieving disciple. He goes to seek him, speaks to him gently, allows him to touch His Wounds in order to convince him, and brings him back from his error. After having admired such wondrous charity, let us thank Jesus Christ for having exercised it towards us, not once, but times without number.

POINT III.— Let us consider how gloriously St. Thomas **repaired his fault.** Full of faith, he boldly confessed the Divinity and Immortality of Jesus Christ. He is believed to be the author of the Article concerning the Resurrection in the Apostles' Creed; he went to the ends of the earth to preach it, he died in order to seal this truth of our faith with his own blood. How happy should we be were we to make amends for our faults as this saint did! Let us resolve to act in like manner.

Tuesday.

ON THE CONFESSION OF ST. THOMAS.

"*My Lord and my God*" (ST. JOHN xx. 28).

POINT I.— This is at once an expression and feeling of **wonder,** at seeing the goodness wherewith Our Savior came to him. Have we not greater reason to be astonished because Our Lord with such goodness comes to us in Holy Communion?

POINT II.— It is a feeling and **profession of faith,** which is to make up for his past lack of unquestioning belief. He acknowledges the

Divinity of His Redeemer and intends in due course to go to the ends of the earth to preach it. Let us revive our faith through these words of St. Thomas.

POINT III.— It is a feeling and an expression of **contrition** on account of his unbelief, to which he pleads guilty. He was only wanting in faith once, and we have been unfaithful so often.

POINT IV.— It is a feeling and an expression of **love.** Let us try to conceive the same at sight of the goodness and of the most precious Wounds of Our Lord, and let us go to Holy Communion with sentiments of faith, admiration, contrition and love.

Wednesday.

"*The first day of the week . . . Jesus came and stood in the midst*" (ST. JOHN xx. 19).

POINT I.— Let us consider the **goodness of Jesus Christ when risen** and glorified, in being the first to seek out, in preference to all, the very men who had abandoned Him at the beginning of His Passion. Jesus exercises the same kindness towards us every day, seeking us out after we have offended Him. Are we grateful for this loving kindness, and what return do we make?

POINT II.— He shows Himself to His disciples, who were assembled together in a house with the doors fast shut: "*The doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together.*"

Let us separate ourselves as they did **from the irreligious world,** far removed from its cares and pleasures; let us close our heart to exterior dissipation, and in retirement and recollection we shall enjoy the presence of Jesus Christ.

POINT III.— The disciples were **transported with joy,** when they saw their Savior in their midst: *"The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord."* We feel a certain satisfaction in the festive meetings of the world; but it is generally followed by bitterness and remorse. The sweet delight we enjoy with Jesus Christ in church, in prayer and in the society of the religious-minded is pure and hallowed. Let us then, if we prefer the joy which the world gives to that which Jesus bestows, lament our sinfulness of heart.

Thursday.

"Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God" (ST. MATT. v. 9).

POINT I.— A peaceful spirit keeps us **at peace with God,** against Whom sin declares war; it maintains union and charity with our neighbor, and brings about good understanding and friendship between each and all, by uniting minds that had become alienated; finally, it strives to reconcile sinners with God, by bringing back rebellious subjects to their Sovereign Lord. This kind of spirit, says St. Paul, is more excellent than we can possibly understand. *"The peace of God which surpasseth all understanding"* (PHILIP. iv. 7).

POINT II.— The peaceable have the happiness of **resembling God,** Who is the God of peace, and they are thus His beloved Children. In this capacity, He loves, protects, caresses and loads them with blessings; He prepares for them as for His true children a rich inheritance.

POINT III.— Our Blessed Savior, Whom we are bound to imitate, came down from heaven to earth **to bring peace** and to reconcile us with His Father; He always accosted His disciples by wishing them peace. *"Peace be to you,"* He constantly exclaimed. He taught them to do the same whenever they entered any house. He endured everything in order to avoid the least occasion for breaking peace. Let us, as faithful disciples of the *"Prince of peace,"* imitate this beautiful example.

Friday.

Jesus Christ said to His disciples: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you" (ST. JOHN xx. 21).

POINT I.— Jesus Christ was sent into the world by His Father for the sanctification of souls, and for this end He has established His ministers in the Church. He has shed His Blood for the salvation of men, and his **ministers are**

sent to finish what He began. How great this ministry is! But it is to be dreaded on account of the obligations it imposes! Let us respect, even in the most unworthy representatives, Jesus Christ Himself, the Author of this dignity, and let us profit by the powerful helps He has left us.

POINT II.— Jesus Christ breathes on the Apostles and communicates to them the Holy Spirit by this sign:—"*He breathed on them; and He said to them: 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost'*" (ST. JOHN xx. 22). It is no longer the man, but **the Holy Spirit Who acts,** speaks and sanctifies us by the ministrations of the priest; if his offices are fruitless and we remain unchanged after having received so much assistance, we should not lay the blame on the minister, but on our own unworthiness.

POINT III.— Jesus Christ said to His Apostles that the sins which they should remit on earth should be remitted in heaven: "*Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them*" (ST. JOHN xx. 23). What kindness on God's part, to provide in the Sacrament of Penance so simple and efficacious a remedy for sinners and to **deliver up the claims of His justice into the hands of a man** whose own weakness should cause him to be tender with regard to mine! Who should be more grateful for so great a favor than I myself, who am so great a sinner?

Saturday.

"Thomas . . . was not with them when Jesus came" (St. John xx. 24).

Point I.— St. Thomas had not the consolation of seeing Jesus Christ on the first Easter Sunday, nor of receiving the Holy Spirit with the other disciples: *"Thomas . . . was not with them."* **How many graces have been lost** through our not being found where we ought to be! How many do I in this way lose daily!

Point II.— He refuses to believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the testimony of all the other disciples: *"I will not believe."* He prefers to think that they are in error, rather than he himself. **Pride has made** a very **great many unbelievers**, and sensuality has made many others. Let us be humble and mortified, and we shall believe the word of God without difficulty.

Point III.— It is not to St. Thomas separated from his brethren, but to the disciples together assembled that Jesus Christ manifests Himself: *"Where the disciples were gathered together."* **We should believe the Church** rather than certain presumptuous folk who set their face against her decisions and who have been long isolated and without followers. Jesus Christ will never break His promises and abandon the Church to enlighten certain rebellious and indocile minds. Let us believe the Church, and we shall be safe from all error.

Second Sunday after Easter.

"I am the Good Shepherd" (St. John x. 11).

Point I.— Jesus Christ **possesses all the qualities of a good shepherd.** He has knowledge of, nay, is well acquainted with His flock; He knows their needs and what is beneficial or hurtful to them. He has power to protect them; no one can snatch away any of His sheep. He has a sincere and devoted love for His flock, for which He has given His Blood and His Life. Let us rejoice at being under the guidance of so good a Pastor.

Point II.— **He performs all the duty of a good Shepherd.** He leads us, and under His guidance there is nothing to fear; He defends us from wolves, by which are meant the enemies of our salvation. He feeds us in giving us His Body and His Blood; He watches continually over the flock, so that it can never be taken at unawares. Let us beg Him to perform those good offices towards us, until He shall have led us to the eternal pastures He has prepared for us: *in amœna virentia.*

Point III.— This Divine Pastor has a purpose worthy of Himself, and He wishes to honor us by **associating us to carry it out.** He wishes to bring into His fold all the sheep that are scattered over the face of the earth. He desires that there should be only *"one Fold and one Shepherd"* (St. John x. 16). He wishes us to help Him to gather them together. Our brethren are working gloriously for this end in all parts of the world. Are we not wishful to achieve something for this cause?

Monday.

ON THE QUALITIES OF OUR SAVIOR'S SHEEP.

POINT I.— The foremost quality in a sheep is **innocence.** It is the least mischievous of all animals. This is also the character of God's chosen ones: innocent and saintly in their behavior, without envy or enmity or dislike to others; they wish no evil, and they do no harm to any one.

POINT II.— **Gentleness** is the second quality in a sheep. It lets itself be deprived of its wool and goes to the slaughter uncomplaining — in the words of holy Scripture, when seeking to express the gentleness of Our Savior. Such gentleness, in case of the elect, proceeds from the mortification of their senses and concupiscences, from contempt of the world and true charity. This is the source of that calm of soul we admire in the saints, but which we imitate so badly.

POINT III.— The third quality in a sheep is **docility.** It allows itself to be led without trouble, attaches itself to its shepherd, hears his voice, follows him, and, if it strays, it returns at once, so soon as the shepherd calls. *"And they shall be taught of God"* (ST. JOHN vi. 45).

The like docility distinguishes those who belong to God from such as are not of His flock. Let us beware lest the love of our own will and resistance to the voice of our Divine Shepherd when He guides or recalls us should deprive us of the privilege of belonging to His flock.

Tuesday.

ON THE MERCENARY SHEPHERD.

POINT I.— **To seek our own interest** rather than that of God or of our neighbor is to be a hireling in the duties of zeal for souls. Is it not acting from self-interest to seek after prominent posts, in order to achieve reputation; to bid for gainful situations, to make profit out of them; to aim at agreeable pursuits, that we may enjoy our ease; and to shrink from and refuse employments which possess none of these advantages? This is not to be a true shepherd, but a phantom shepherd, the Scripture says: *"O shepherd and idol"* (ZACH. xi. 17).

POINT II.— The shepherd who is a hireling is **dastardly in service**; not only the approach of the wolf, but the slightest discomfort makes him fear and flee. When nothing is lacking, and we have every comfort, *usque ad delicias;* when everything tends to flatter our self-love; when there is neither danger, nor repulse, nor worry to put up with, to labor is then sweet; but such shepherds are not animated by zeal: *"They fed themselves and not My flock."*

Point III.— The mercenary shepherd is alike **worthless and cruel.** He abandons the sheep and allows them to be carried off by the wolf and lets them perish. It had been far better not to have undertaken such office, than to have assumed it unbidden and rule the flock harshly; since Jesus Christ declares that He will punish us severely if the sheep become lost through our fault.

Wednesday.

On the Goodness of God towards Men.

Point I.— **God called us into existence;** He has given us our body and soul with faculties truly wondrous. He has provided us with all kinds of assistance in the creatures He has fashioned for our needs and our use. All you have and all you see afford proof of His goodness. Let us especially ponder over all our natural gifts. Let us give thanks to their Author and never make use of them save for His glory.

Point II.— He has **redeemed us with His Blood,** caused us to be born of Catholic parents, regenerated us in the waters of Baptism, purified us from our sins through the Sacrament of Penance and fed us with His own Flesh in the Holy Eucharist; He protects us during life and in death by help of a guardian Angel, by virtue of the Sacraments and by an infinity of graces interior and exterior. A single one of such graces would deserve all my heart's love. Why then am I destitute of love for a God Who is so generous in my regard?

POINT III.— God prepares for us in eternity a **kingdom of peace and delight**; He wishes to be Himself our happiness and reward and to satisfy all the desires of our heart. Can we be sufficiently humbled on beholding so much kindness on one side and so much ingratitude on the other?

Thursday.

ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD TOWARDS SINNERS.

POINT I.— The sinner after having offended His God deserves nothing but death and the penal fire of hell; **God**, however, **stretches forth His hand to withdraw him from sin**, forestalls him with His goodness, seeks for him, recalls him to Himself by holy inspirations and by salutary remorse, so soon as he has fallen into sin. Yet it is not a king's duty to go in search of his subjects. Is God obliged to seek out a wretched sinner like myself?

POINT II.—Although the sinner abuses the grace of God, **God does not cast Him off**; He bears with the sinner, waits for his conversion and continues to seek him out; He urges him by instructions, examples, promises, threats, even afflictions. How much ought I to fear the justice of God, if I continue to abuse forbearance so great!

Point III.— If the sinner amend and become truly converted, **God receives Him lovingly,** however wicked he may have been; He pardons him joyfully and forgives him everything and for ever. The multitude of my sins should not cause me to despair while there is yet time, but when it shall be too late, the greatness of God's mercy will be unable to save me.

Friday.

On the Goodness of God towards Sinners.

Point I.— **God might have allowed me to be lost** after the first mortal sin I committed, without inflicting any wrong, and had He then cast me into hell, He would have spared Himself a mass of outrages which I have since committed against Him. Why did He not thus punish me? Because He was awaiting my return to Him in order to pardon me: *Espectat ut misereatur.* Shall I never be ashamed of having kept Him waiting?

Point II.— Every time I have consented to sin I have consented to my condemnation; at the present moment, **God may cast me into hell if I be in mortal sin**: why does He not do so? It is a simple result of His kindness towards me: *"The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed"* (Lament. iii. 22). Where should I be, O my God, wert Thou not as merciful as Thou art?

Point III.—Despite the number and enormity of my sins, **God is ready to forgive me if I desire it.** He tends me His friendship, and He asks for my heart: *"My Son, give me thy heart"* (Prov. xxiii. 26). This heart which I have defiled with so many sins—is it so precious an offering that I should make God wait for it so many years? Woe to me if I love not God, so lovable in Himself and so full of love in my regard!

Saturday.

The Goodness of God towards the Just.

Point I.—Neither nobility, nor rank, nor talents exceeding great, can merit for us **the glory with which God favors a just man.** God honors him with His friendship and with special graces; He looks upon him with complacency, treats him as a beloved child and rewards his slightest services a hundredfold. *"Thy friends are made exceedingly honorable"* (Psalm cxxxviii. 17). Are we enjoying such happiness, and do we prefer it to all others?

Point II.—**God protects just souls:** a tender mother is not more mindful of the dangers of the child she loves than God is with regard to his faithful servants: *"The eyes of the Lord are upon the just"* (Psalm xxxiii. 16). He imparts strength to them more particularly against their temptations, their enemies and the hindrances to their salvation. Let us cling to so powerful a protector; never will He fail us.

POINT III.— Though God sometimes allows souls to remain in affliction and at times seems to abandon them to the fury of the storm, it is not because He really does forsake them. He wishes only **to purify them or to increase their merit** and reward, and His ears are ever open to their petitions in times of danger: *"His ears are unto their prayers"* (PSALM xxxiii. 16). If we are wanting in love and in trust in God, it is because we do not realize His goodness towards us.

Third Sunday after Easter.

"A little while and you shall see Me"
(ST. JOHN xvi. 16).

POINT I.— Little remains for us to do, says St. Paul, using an expression of Our Blessed Lord. **The end of our life** and of our work **may be close at hand.** We must hasten to win heaven, and even should our life last as long as that of others usually does, still we must admit the time will be very short. Let us make good use of it, lest, for not having done so, we have to repent during all eternity.

POINT II.— Little remains for us to do if we consider **what God requires from us.** Our troubles, our mortifications, the labors of our state of life: *modicum* — all this is but little in comparison with what men of the world do for their temporal concerns, be it in the army, on their estates, in trade, or in family embarrassments. Moreover, God sweetens our labors and our crosses through His grace and His promises, as well as by hope.

POINT III.— Little remains for us to do as regards **what God has promised us**: *modicum.* What comparison can there be between the glory, riches and delights of paradise, where all is eternal — and the labors and mortifications of our condition in life? They *"are not worthy to be compared,"* says St. Paul (ROM. viii. 18). Let us give to God willingly the little He requires from us, in order to obtain the great and everlasting blessings He promises us.

Monday.

"The world shall rejoice" (ST. JOHN xvi. 20).

POINT I.— **The life of the wicked** would seem a happy one; but it is not so in appearance; their joy **is troubled by countless griefs.** All the pleasures in the world are not able to content them, and their guilty conscience makes them miserable by its stings. *"There is no rest for the wicked, saith the Lord"* (ISAIAS xlviii. 22). Far from envying their good fortune, we ought to pity them.

Point II.— The joy of the wicked is changed at the moment of **death into dire sorrow.** The remembrance of the past, which brings their sins before them; the loss of time and the opportunities of doing good; the present moment, when they are called to leave all that they love; the fear of the future, when they have to appear before a severe judge, who will decide as to a happy or a miserable eternity; all this fills them with bitter apprehension. This is indeed to purchase forbidden pleasures dearly.

Point III.— Finally, the joys of the world are **followed by everlasting sadness in hell.** Is it not folly to expose ourselves to torments which will last for ever, merely to enjoy pleasures that end in a moment?

Tuesday.

"*You shall be made sorrowful*" (St. John xvi. 20).

Point I.— **The life of the good is a mortified life.** The renunciation of forbidden pleasures, persecutions, penance, spiritual desolation, render it bitter, and this is what strikes the eyes of the world: *Vident cruces, sed non vident unctiones.* But the world does not perceive the sweetness which grace, virtue and the hope of a future life shed upon the soul of a servant of God. This is known only from experience.

Point II.— **At death the joy of the good will**

be most marked. The remembrance of their having been preserved from great sins and of the service they have rendered or have wished to render to God, their detachment from the world and from themselves, their trust in the mercy of their Judge are the sources of their joy: *"Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."*

POINT III.—The **great delights,** however, which succeed the sufferings of the good are **those of paradise,** when God gives to His servants a joy deep, real, everlasting, to repay them for the mortifications of a few brief days. Who would not choose to weep with the just and to rejoice for ever with them, rather than to laugh with the wicked and shed bitter tears afterwards throughout eternity?

Wednesday.

"A little while, and you shall not see Me"
(ST. JOHN xvi. 17).

POINT I.—**I have but a short time** longer **to live.** Such language we understand not, nor do we consider it applies to any one in particular, and we apply it not to ourselves. Die we must; every one acknowledges this; but that we are to die soon, no one is ready to admit. Let us undeceive ourselves; neither youth, nor strength of constitution can prolong our days beyond the time marked out by Providence; we are perhaps drawing very near the term; let us then be ready.

POINT II.— **My life is short** indeed **if I compare it with eternity.** A thousand years, according to the language of Scripture, are but as one day in comparison with eternity; indeed, they are only as a day that is already past. Now what is a day that is gone? The longest life ought not to be considered as one hour long. Alas! I have only one hour to live in this world, and I am busying myself merely with the things of this present life which is drawing to a close, without giving a thought as to what will be my condition in the future life never to end. Am I a Christian? Am I even a reasonable being?

POINT III.— My life is truly short indeed as regards **the** manifold **duties I have to fulfill.** How many sins have to be washed away! How many habits and passions have to be overcome! How many virtues have to be acquired to make me like unto Jesus Christ and to secure my everlasting happiness! Yet I have so far done nothing for this end; after death I shall no longer be able to do anything, and I am now neglecting my duties. What then will be my fate in eternity?

Thursday.

ON AMUSEMENTS.

POINT I.— The world often justifies vicious amusements and holds forth against those that are allowable. A Christian, however, should amuse himself only as behoves a Christian. For this end **amusements should be regulated as to their subject.** Debauchery, impurity, conversation contrary to modesty or charity, improper or godless reading — all this is not diversion, but perversion. How can we amuse ourselves with anything which will have to be repented of in this life, or in eternity, when repentance will be in vain?

POINT II.— **Amusements should be regulated as to their time,** according to our occupation and our need. Amusements are no longer innocent if we give up to them the time which should be devoted to practices of religion or charity, to the duties of our state of life, or to the care of our family. They become even sinful, if we make them our main business. There is a time for everything. The custom of the world can never found a claim on the neglect of these truths: when there is a hell to avoid and a heaven to merit, there is no time to waste.

POINT III.— **They should be regulated as to their motive.** A man cannot always apply himself to trying and laborious duties: mind and body both need unbending. A man is not placed in the world for his own sake only, he must sometimes lend himself to the needs of others. We should amuse ourselves from necessity or out of kindness; but religion and reason equally condemn amusements which are recurred to from sheer caprice or passion. Have we always abided by these rules? Do we propose to follow them in the future?

Friday.

"You shall lament and weep" (St. John xvi. 20).

Point I.— It is natural for a criminal, overwhelmed with misery, exiled from his country and fearing the pursuit of justice, to bewail his condition and sigh for his deliverance. **We are all sinners** and experience a multitude of miseries within and without; we languish in this land of exile and suffering, waiting for the heaven which is our true country and having from God's justice everything to fear. Let us apprehend rightly what we are, and we shall learn how to mourn.

Point II.— A true Christian mourns, not only over his own wretched state, but also on account of the manifold **outrages offered daily to God Almighty**; of the dissipation of the world, which is occupied with the things of earth alone; and of the blindness of so many souls speeding to their eternal ruin. We are ourselves worldlings, if we are insensible to such reflections.

Point III.— **We mourn when some one has done us some injury** or wrong; when we fail in our undertakings, experience some affliction, or feel the hardships of poverty. If we know only how to mourn for reasons such as these, we are worldlings out and out; it is greatly to be feared that we shall go on mourning throughout eternity.

Saturday.

"You shall lament and weep"
(St. John xvi. 20).

Point I.— Instead of being afraid of sufferings, we ought, if only we knew their advantages, to desire them, as did the saints. **They detach us from the world,** which we love when it smiles upon us; they prompt us to think of God and of our salvation which in prosperity and pleasure we forget. Let us adore the designs of God in the sufferings He sends and profit by them as our good Father wishes us to do.

Point II.— **Sufferings purify and preserve us from sin.** Certain is it that our sins have to be punished either in this world or in the next. We have not courage enough to punish ourselves; why should we complain, if God in His mercy punishes us in this world that He may in the next deliver us from the severity of His justice? How many sins we should have committed had God spared us our health and all the advantages whose loss we are now deploring!

Point III.— **Sufferings are a presage of predestination.** They produce in us the conformity with Jesus Christ which is necessary to salvation. If we suffer with Him, we shall be glorified with Him. Are we better than Christ? What will it avail us to adore Him on the Cross, if we are enemies of the cross? Let us grieve over our blindness and call seriously to mind the sufferings of Jesus, that we may suffer with Him, like Him and through love of Him.

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

WE SHOULD GO TO GOD.

"*I go to Him that sent Me*" (ST. JOHN xvi. 5).

POINT I.—**In all our plans we should go to God.** For Him are we made and solely for this end are we in the world, that we may render ourselves worthy to possess Him for ever, after having in this life served Him. It is to this end, so glorious and advantageous to us, that all our plans should tend.

POINT II.—**We should go to God in our desires.** We shall be perfectly happy when we possess Him; everywhere else we find nothing but misery and trouble of mind. What can be more worthy of our desires?

POINT III.—**We should go to God in all our actions,** never doing anything that is not a step, so to speak, towards Him; in other words, we should never perform any act that is evil, since it would withdraw us from Him. We should do good deeds and render those which are the most indifferent meritorious, by the holy intention of pleasing God and preparing ourselves worthily to possess Him.

Monday.

"*It is expedient to you that I go*"
(ST. JOHN xvi. 7).

POINT I.—Our Blessed Redeemer had no need to leave the world in order to be happy; He was so equally everywhere. **If He goes away** to heaven, **it is for our good.** In everything He seeks our advantage. He was born, lived, died and rose again for our sake. He ascended into heaven, for the same loving purpose: *Totus in meos usus expensus,* says St. Bernard. Since He has done all this for me, ought not I to be entirely His, in my thoughts, words and actions?

POINT II.—*"If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you."* The sensible presence of the sacred Humanity of our Blessed Lord caused the Apostles to feel a tender and, it may be, the **natural love** which was **a hindrance to the plenitude of graces** the Holy Spirit was to communicate to them. It would have been grievous indeed for them to leave Him in order to preach, labor and suffer in all parts of the world. If their affection might have produced such an effect on the Apostles, how much should we fear our carnal, selfish and vicious attachments!

POINT III.—It was **expedient,** moreover, **for us that He should go** to heaven **to prepare a place for us** in that happy kingdom of which He goes to take possession: *"I go to prepare a place for you"* (ST. JOHN xiv. 2). Our place is ready there; let us not by our sins close the door against ourselves; let us long to possess it and strive that we may. By doing this the good intentions of Jesus in our behalf will not prove fruitless.

Tuesday.

"*When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth*" (St. John xvi. 13).

Point I.— **The Holy Spirit would** Himself **be our Master** and Instructor. To receive the instructions of this Divine Master, we should listen attentively, freeing our mind and heart from the disturbance of creatures; we should hear Him with docility and be ready to do what He enjoins. Let us often say to Him, as did Samuel, "*Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth*" (1 Kings iii. 9), and with St. Paul, "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*" (Acts ix. 6).

Point II.— Our Divine Master gives us the **facility to understand His lessons** and strength to put them in practice, which other masters cannot. He taught the Prophets and the Apostles, who were uncouth, unpolished men; He taught the saints wondrous truths and afterwards caused them to practice virtues most heroic. Jesus Christ will do the like for us, if we submit to His guidance.

Point III.— The lessons He imparts are not the speculative truths of religion only, but the **practical truths also of the gospel**: the mortification of our passions, the avoidance of the slightest sins, the practice of humility, patience and charity. If we examine into our conduct, we shall find we have profited but little by such sublime teachings.

Wednesday.

EVERYTHING SHOULD LEAD US TO GOD.

POINT I.— The **sufferings of this life** should detach us from the world; should make us long for heaven, think of Jesus Christ suffering, implore His help and imitate His patience, so as to merit His reward. A Christian should consider the troubles of this life as the road leading to true life, to the kingdom of God. If we possess not these feelings, let us beg of Jesus Christ to give them to us.

POINT II.— The **blessings we have received** from God — the endowments of our soul, the energies of our body, our possessions, occupations, the honor paid to us — have all been given for God's glory; gratitude and justice require that we should employ all to this end. Woe to us if we rob Him of His glory in order to arrogate it to ourselves!

POINT III.— **Everything we see may help us** to raise our hearts to God. The sight of a flower, or a tree sufficed to cause the saints to do so. All we see in the universe announces to us some one of His perfections, His greatness, power, wisdom, goodness, mercy, or justice. Let us love God, and we shall find occasion everywhere to glorify Him and sanctify ourselves.

Thursday.

HOW WE SHOULD GO TO GOD.

POINT I.— God has placed us in the world that we may glorify Him; let us seek then His glory in all our actions. *"Do all for the glory of God."* **Let us seek God singly;** the most indifferent actions can lead me to heaven, if I perform them for God; and I lose the merit of my holiest actions, if I connect them only with myself. If I act from self-interest, out of vanity, or to please myself and do not bless God amid misfortunes as well as in prosperity, it is to be feared greatly that I care only for myself.

POINT II.— **Let us seek God fervently;** His greatness and goodness deserve this. Our need of Him should induce us so to do. If our soul is so needy before God, it comes from our being languid in the practice of mortification, penance, humility and all lofty virtue. Let us take shame for doing so little for God, Who has done and is doing so much for us day by day.

POINT III.— **Let us go to God with perseverance** and without being disheartened. Why should we slacken our virtue? Is not virtue ever holy alike and beautiful? Is not God always most lovable? Are not His judgments ever severe, His threats ever terrible, His rewards always abundant? My God, convert my inconstancy into firmness, and detach me from myself that henceforth I may be Thine wholly and for ever.

Friday.

"*Because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart*" (St. John xvi. 6).

Point I.— The Apostles were **sorrow-stricken on hearing that their Master was going** to leave them; but had they asked why He was leaving them, they would have rejoiced at His departure. Let us have recourse to prayer in our troubles; in it shall we find strength and consolation.

Point II.— When God seems to withdraw from us and abandon us, we should **grieve at having given Him occasion so to do** through our own fault; yet let us not be discouraged, but trust still in His goodness. Though His presence be not always sensible to us, His help is ever at hand to lift us up after our falls, to uphold us in tribulation and cause it to turn to our advantage.

Point III.— When God deprives us of His sensible graces, it is in order **to punish or to try us**; let us continue to serve Him with fervor and remember that He is often close by us when we think Him afar off. He sees all our troubles, allows them for our good and for this very purpose helps us; let us therefore remain always faithful to Him; sensible devotion is not that which is to us of most avail, nor most to the glory of God. To seek rather consolations from God than the God of consolations is not loving God purely for His own sake.

Saturday.

"*When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth*" (St. John xvi. 13).

Point I.— We have reason to fear that we are not imbued with the Holy Spirit, Who is a Spirit of truth, since **we very often deceive ourselves,** above all in the things of God. We are more attached to things of earth than to those of heaven; we are eager, keen and feverish about earthly things, and languid as regards things heavenly; often do we consider good that which is bad, and bad that which is good; directly a thing pleases us, we conclude it must be good. How much need have we of the Holy Spirit, and how earnestly should we strive to obtain His aid!

Point II.— **We very often deceive others.** Vanity, self-interest, flattery, expediency and politeness often make us fail in truthfulness and lead us to deceive others. Let us beg the Holy Ghost to give us His Spirit, and if it sometimes humbles us to own the truth, we shall recognize our gain in doing so and shall see nothing but harm in the want of sincerity which we look upon as so advantageous to us.

Point III.— **We are very often deceived.** People dare not tell us the truth for fear of offending us, and we avoid those who would have sincerity enough to disclose it to us. People deceive us by praises and flattery, and we like to be so deceived, when they hide from us the truths it concerns us most to know. All these evils result from our self-love. Let us beg of Jesus Christ to send us the Spirit of truth Whom He promised to the Apostles before His Ascension; let us prepare ourselves as they did to receive Him and the love of truth will free us from all such disorders.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

ON PRAYER.

POINT I.— Jesus Christ exhorts us to **ask confidently for everything that is necessary** for us; He reproaches us with our negligence as to prayer: *"Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name. Ask and you shall receive"* (ST. JOHN xvi. 24). Can He make known to us more plainly the desire He has to grant whatever we ask for? This should fill us with confidence when we pray, and our many needs should make us pray earnestly.

POINT II.—*"Lord, teach us to pray"* (ST. LUKE xi. 1). We should say this to Our Lord even as did the Apostles. **We neither know what we should ask from God,** nor how we should ask. He will teach us both the one and the other, if we humbly beg Him to do so with the wish to profit by His teaching.

POINT III.— **What God wishes us to ask from Him is perfect happiness:** *"That your joy may be full"* (ST. JOHN xvi. 24); all in fact that is necessary for body, soul, time and eternity, He is rich, is liberal and loves us; He wishes us to ask humbly, confidently, perseveringly and, above all, desires that if we hope to obtain what we ask, we should grant Him what He requires from us, namely, that we should not offend Him, but should love and obey Him.

Monday. (Rogation Day.)

ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

"*Our Father, Who art in heaven*" (ST. MATT. vi. 9).

POINT I.—We begin our prayer to God by calling Him by the **loving name of Father.** He is our Father, because from Him we have our whole being, body, soul and all we are; because He has adopted us through redemption and by grace; He knows, loves, protects us and prepares for us an everlasting inheritance. We ought to behave in everything as worthy Children of such a Father. We should yield to Him, in this relation of Fatherhood, what He has every right to: honor, love, obedience. We should go to Him with unbounded confidence.

POINT II.—Not only do we call God Father, but **Our Father,** because He is really the common Father of all and especially of all Christians. By this we declare we are all brethren and should hence love one another; we profess that we wish to pray for our brethren from a motive of charity, and hope our prayers will be heard the more readily since they are united with those of our Christian brethren.

POINT III.— **Who art in heaven.** Although God is everywhere, even within us, we should in our prayer consider Him as *"in heaven,"* where He manifests Himself to the blessed. This thought will raise our mind from earth, will make us attentive in prayer and cause us to ask reverently for the blessings of heaven and eternity: *"Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth"* (COLOSSIANS ii. 3).

Tuesday.

ON THE FIRST PETITION.

"Hallowed be Thy name" (ST. MATT. vi. 9).

POINT I.— The first and most worthy object of our desires and prayers is that God our Father should be glorified and **His holy name be hallowed.** He has created everything for His glory, and we are in the world for this alone: the object of our special vocation is to procure His greater glory. For this we need His grace, and we beseech it at the outset of our prayer. Let us beware, however, lest instead of seeking the glory of God we seek merely our own.

POINT II.— The hallowing of the name of God which we ask for is, first, that **nothing may be done to dishonor it,** such as the superstitions of the heathen, impiety, sacrilege, blasphemies and contempt of His worship and His laws; secondly, that He should be **known, reverenced, honored, loved and blessed** on earth as He is in heaven, where saints and angels will proclaim for ever in song that He is holy in Himself, in all His purposes and in all His works: *"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty"* (APOC. iv. 8). This is the only good we can wish Him.

POINT III.—In order **to hallow His name as we ought,** we must, first, glorify Him in ourselves by our loyalty, worship, praises; secondly, must wish that all men should praise and serve Him; thirdly, must labor for His glory and rejoice when others promote it: *Utinam omnes prophetent!* What are we doing in this intent? What are we purposing to do?

Wednesday.

ON THE SECOND PETITION.

"Thy Kingdom come" (ST. MATT. vi. 10).

POINT I.—After having asked for what relates to the honor of God our Father, we beg for ourselves, who are His Children, the true and eternal **inheritance** which **He has prepared for us.** This is the *"Kingdom"* of God, since there will He reign with supreme authority over His saints, without opposition or rebellion or sin, and enjoy the love of His happy subjects. It is our *"Kingdom"* also, since in it we shall possess perfect happiness; for when we speak of an earthly king, we imply a man who is rich, honored, happy, one who has all he desires. If we really wish for paradise, we must detach ourselves from the world and from this life, which we must be willing to surrender; otherwise, to ask for it is to contradict ourselves, as St. Cyprian says: *"As when some one who wishes to live a long time is asking that the Kingdom of God may come quickly."*

Point II.— The *"Kingdom"* of God which we ask for is **His reign within our hearts:** *"The Kingdom of God is within you"* (St. Luke xvii. 21). This is when He rules them by His grace and through our love. In order to ensure His reigning there, we must drive out sin, which is His enemy, and place ourselves wholly under the guidance of His grace.

Point III.— The *"Kingdom"* of God is also **His reign in the world.** If men, who are the subjects of Him Who is King throughout all times and over all nations, acknowledged Him as their God and admitted the Divinity and the Sovereignty of Jesus Christ, and if they submitted to His laws, they would choose Him for their king. What happiness this would be for those who love Him! We ask for this: *"Thy Kingdom come."* Let us add our efforts to our prayers, in order to establish a kingdom so rightful and so greatly to be desired.

Ascension Day.

Point I.— After having considered what happened on the Mount of Olives, where Our Lord took leave of His Holy Mother and His beloved disciples and gave them His last blessing, let us contemplate our Divine Savior ascending to heaven, **resplendent with glory, and accompanied by the angels,** and by the saints whom he has released from Limbus. Let us share the joy of the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles, and through their example strengthen our faith and hope. They detached themselves completely from this earth, which their Master had just left; and they longed only for paradise, whither He had gone. Let us have a like detachment and a like desire.

Point II.— Let us consider the **majestic entry of Our Savior into heaven,** the praises and blessings which He received, the august throne whereon He was seated at the right hand of His Father, the glory, the delight and the blissful life He takes possession of for all eternity. After having congratulated Him lovingly and joyfully, let us consider how good it is to labor for God, since He rewards so liberally. Let us suffer with Our Savior, and we shall also reign with Him: *"If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him"* (2 Tim. ii. 12).

Point III.— **Our Lord in heaven is the cause of the happiness of the saints.** He governs His Church apportioning His graces and His gifts to the faithful, receiving and granting their prayers; He prepares a place for each one of us. We should earnestly desire to become companions of the saints. Let us apply to our Lord and Savior with full confidence. Let us strive to obtain the place He has merited for us.

Friday.

THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND OF THE APOSTLES AFTER THE ASCENSION.

POINT I.— **Their thoughts were of heaven,** whither the risen Lord had ascended and where He was preparing for them endless happiness. They thought of nothing else: *"Mind the things which are above"* (COL. iii. 2). It is thither our thoughts should lead us; thither all our desires should tend. We have no abiding city here, the heavenly Jerusalem is our true country.

POINT II.— **They spoke only of heaven:** this was the sole subject of their discourse; in their troubles, labors and persecutions, they encouraged themselves and others with this hope; they spoke of heaven as their fatherland, as their inheritance, as the bourne of all their wayfarings.

POINT III.— **All their labors were for heaven.** They sent thither beforehand the fruit of all their acts; these acts were so many steps of approach to their dear country; so many titles to merit it now and to possess it at some future time. Let us imitate this holy life, convinced that everything we do not perform for paradise is to us so much lost.

Saturday.

ON THE THIRD PETITION.

"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (ST. MATT. vi. 10).

POINT I.—After having asked God our Father to give us the Kingdom of Heaven, the everlasting Kingdom which is meant for our inheritance, we beg Him to give us grace that we may **submit our will to His** during the wearisome delay in obtaining the Kingdom which we are waiting to possess. The heir to a throne exiled from his country and immured in a dungeon is impatient to be set free, that he may mount the throne which is set up for him in his palace; he greatly needs patience and resignation to brook the slightest delay. Such is our own case. We some day are to be happy in our Kingdom. The happiness is deferred, and much do we need patience and conformity to the will of God: *"Thy will be done."*

POINT II.—We ask moreover that God's will may be done, in order that by doing it **we may merit this kingdom.** God does many things by His supreme will; but He wishes many other things that depend on our free will and which He commands us to do; He wishes us to accomplish many things which He counsels us to do for our perfection. To God's absolute will should we submit with resignation; we must do with loyal compliance what He commands; devote ourselves heartily to what He counsels and fulfill in all respects His holy will: *"Thy will be done."*

POINT III.— God Almighty teaches us by a beautiful illustration **how we ought to fulfill His holy will:** *"on earth as it is in heaven"*— as the angels and saints do His will in heaven; they carry it out in all particulars lovingly and without self-seeking of any kind. Let us accomplish this holy will as they do in heaven, earnestly and lovingly and without reference to our own interests: *"Thy will be done."*

Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension.

"You shall give testimony of Me" (ST. JOHN xv. 27).

POINT I.— The Apostles have given testimony to Jesus Christ **by the holiness of their life** and have thereby made known the sanctity of their Master. We are bound to bear the like witness by our innocence and irreproachable demeanor. We ought to show how guileless, holy and perfect Our Savior was, and thus, even when silent, we glorify Him, are His joy and His guerdon, whereas an ill-regulated life is shame and confusion to Him: *in nobis patitur opprobrium.*

POINT II.— The Apostles gave testimony to Jesus Christ **by their words.** They gave witness to His Divinity, His Majesty and His miracles; urging all to serve Him, love Him and keep His commandments. Since our vocation requires us to bear the like witness, let us redouble our zeal, and, so far as we are able, let us lead others to the worship and love of Our Lord and to the fulfillment of His law.

Point III.— The Apostles gave testimony to Christ **by their labors,** their sufferings and the shedding of their blood. We esteem those singularly blessed who, like the Apostles, have had the happiness of dying for the cause of God. In our meditations we yearn to do the like, and we offer ourselves for martyrdom; yet the least trouble we have to incur, or the slightest contradiction, at once thwarts us. What is our zeal worth, if it move us when self-love alone is its spring and source?

Monday.

On the Fourth Petition.

"Give us this day our daily bread"
(St. Luke xi. 3).

Point I.— While waiting for the Kingdom prepared for us and laboring to obtain it, **we have need of sustenance for body and soul,** and we ask God to give us what is necessary for both the one and the other. God is our Father, and He will not refuse food to His Children. He is our Master, we are working for Him, and He will supply us with all that is needful to keep us strong in His service. Let us renew our confidence in Him.

POINT II.— We beg **bread for the body and for our natural support**; this implies whatsoever is necessary; not indulgence, not luxuries. We ask for food day by day and for each day, because we need it daily, and it must come to us from God, either by a fresh gift, or by the preservation of what He has already given us: we ask for it for one day only, *"this day,"* because, having a Kingdom waiting for us, we do not look forward to a long protracted sojourn in the world we now inhabit.

POINT III.— The bread **we ask for our soul is the word of God,** that word which is our daily sustenance, the graces, lights, inspirations and consolations, which gladden us, strengthen us and preserve our supernatural life: *"our supersubstantial bread"* (ST. MATT. vi. 2). This bread is the Holy Eucharist, the bread of the angels which is our nourishment also; it is our daily bread, because we need it day by day; every day invites us to receive it, and we ought to be in a state fit to receive it daily: *"So live as to deserve daily to receive."*

Tuesday.

ON THE FIFTH PETITION.

"*And forgive us our debts*" (ST. MATT. vi. 12).

POINT I.—**Our sins render us unworthy** of the love of God our Father, of the everlasting Kingdom which is our inheritance and of His fatherly care in providing us with all the necessaries of life. In order to obtain these we ask from Him forgiveness of our sins, and to this end, our prayer should be accompanied by true contrition for having offended our Father, our Benefactor and our Remunerator.

POINT II.—**We speak of our sins as Debts:** *debita nostra;* we owe God whatever we have unjustly deprived Him of through offending Him; we have to satisfy His Majesty for the trespass committed and His rigorous justice for the penalty we have incurred. These are formidable debts, since all the satisfactions of the holiest of God's creatures cannot discharge them; they needed the reparation of a God-Man; and, as regards the penalty, all we can suffer in this life cannot acquit it. Let us implore the great God Whom we have so offended, to accept what His Son offers Him for the remission of these debts: "*Look on the face of thy Christ*" (PSALM lxxxiii. 9).

POINT III.—We very often ask God to forgive us our sins and cancel our debts; but **it is an insult**, surely, **to contract new debts** and to continue to offend Him. To render our prayer effectual, we must detest the past with heart-felt sorrow and anticipate the future with a resolute purpose of amendment.

Wednesday.

ON THE SIXTH PETITION.

"As we also forgive our debtors" (ST. MATT. vi. 12).

POINT I.— God wishes to preserve peace and charity among His children, and He requires us **to forgive our brethren their offenses against this charity.** In order to induce us so to pardon, He declares that He will treat us as we treat others and that He will forgive us if we forgive, but not otherwise. This is a most just condition and very greatly to our advantage. We forgive slight offenses only, a thoughtless word, a trifling neglect, or an imaginary affront, and God forgives us sins which have deserved hell. Let us accept this condition and forgive with all our heart.

POINT II.— We impose a law upon ourselves; **we ask to be forgiven as we forgive.** If we forgive heartily, if we add charity, kind acts and prayer to our forgiveness, God will do the like to us. If we harbor resentment, aversion and hatred, we thereby ask God to do the same with regard to ourselves. Hence should we fear lest God might grant our request whenever we say to Him: *"Forgive . . . as we forgive."*

POINT III.— God wishes to take from ourselves the rule and measure for forgiveness, and we, on our part, should **receive from Him the example of forgiveness.** Although shamefully maltreated, He forgives sincerely, heartily, promptly, entirely and for ever; He wishes to forget our sins; such is the rule He prescribes and the pattern He offers for our imitation, if we would be His beloved children: "*That you may be the children of your Father, Who is in heaven*" (ST. MATT. v. 45).

Thursday.

ON THE SEVENTH PETITION.

"*And lead us not into temptation*" (ST. MATT. vi. 13).

POINT I.— After having begged forgiveness of our sins from God, we entreat Him **not to let us in future commit fresh sin** by yielding to temptation. We do not ask that we should not be tempted, for that is impossible in a life which is a constant warfare; it is not even expedient for us; but we do ask God to help us, by His grace, to resist temptation and not to expose us to any by which He foresees we should be overcome. This demands our fervent prayer, since on it depends our perseverance.

POINT II.— Our temptations proceed either **from the flesh,** with its violent inclination to sensual satisfaction; or **from the world,** with its deceitful promises and threats, to make us neglect our duty; or **from the devil**, who makes use of our flesh or of the world, in order to ruin us at all seasons, in all places and in all conditions of life. Consequently, since we have to contend with such formidable enemies, we should be on our guard: "*Watch;*" we must pray without ceasing: "*and pray that ye enter not into temptation*" (St. Matt. xxvi. 41).

Point III.— It would be to court our ruin and **to set God at nought**, were we to expose ourselves to temptation, while we are asking to be delivered from it, and were we to place ourselves in circumstances which excite the evil inclinations of the flesh and give the devil strength to overcome us. Let us not be guilty of conduct so shameful.

Friday.

ON THE EIGHTH PETITION.

"*But deliver us from evil. Amen*" (St. Matt. vi. 13).

Point I.— We end our prayer by asking God to deliver us from the evils which may befall us in soul and body, both in this life and the next. **The evil of the soul is sin**, and the punishment we have deserved by sinning, the temptations of the devil, death, an eternity of suffering, the greatest of all evils: "*But deliver us from evil.*" Let us tell God often that we are willing to be afflicted with all other troubles, provided only He deliver us from this one.

Point II.— We pray in addition to be delivered from **all bodily and temporal ills,** from sickness, reverses, losses, persecution. God sends us these things, not as evils, but as occasions for meriting heaven. The harm which may accompany them is impatience, vexation, sin of every kind; we ask God to soften these trials by His consolations, by His blessings and by hope of reward.

Point III.— We end all our petitions by saying: *Amen, "So be it,"* thereby to confirm all we have asked for; it is a renewal of our requests, to manifest the desire we have of obtaining them, to show our hope and to make our prayer more effectual. Let us ask in the Name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, as He Himself recommends us to do: *"in My Name"* (St. John xiv. 13); and as the Chruch does at the conclusion of all her prayers: *"Through Christ our Lord."*

Saturday, The Vigil of Pentecost.

Point I.— The Blessed Virgin and the Apostles, with the other disciples, prepared themselves for receiving the Holy Ghost. The first preparation was **retirement**; they withdrew into solitude, that they might recollect themselves and detach their hearts from everything which could place an obstacle in the way of the blessings they were expecting. We shall never receive light from heaven unless we renounce completely all vain eagerness about outward things and enter into ourselves that we may hearken to the voice of God.

POINT II.— The second preparation was **prayer and meditation.** During their retirement they bethought them of the greatness of Him Whom they were about to receive, of the fruits He was going to produce in their souls and of the change which would soon be worked in the world. From such reflections they conceived an earnest longing for His coming, and they asked for it humbly and perseveringly. The Holy Spirit wishes to give Himself to us and to enrich us with His gifts and graces; but we must petition Him for them, and, that we may do this fittingly, He bestows on us the grace and spirit of prayer.

POINT III.— The third preparation was **union of mind and brotherly love**; they were all together, in one and the same place, but they were even more closely united in mind and heart than in the house where they were living. The Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of peace, increased this union between the disciples to such a degree that they had only *"one heart and one soul"* (ACTS iv. 32). Let us put away from us everything that can mar union and sever hearts, and the Holy Ghost will delight in imparting Himself to us.

Feast of Pentecost.

Point I.— It was on the day of Pentecost that God gave the Israelites the law which He had written on tables of stone. He chooses on the same day to give the law of the new covenant, **a law of love,** which the Holy Ghost comes to engrave in the hearts of men and to perpetuate in the Church. Let us thank God that we have been born under so mild a dispensation; let us beg Him to inscribe it in our hearts and avouch to Him that we intend to observe it.

Point II.— A mighty wind shook the room where the Apostles were assembled and filled them with alarm. At the same time it made known to them that the life-giving Spirit, Whom they were about to receive, would bestow on them **strength, courage and zeal** to undertake any and everything for the glory of God. Let us try to feel this wholesome fear, and the Holy Ghost will give us the like courage, strength and zeal.

Point III.— The Holy Ghost appeared in the **form of fiery tongues,** which rested on the head of each one of this blessed conclave. He signified by this symbol the effects he was going to work within them. Fire purifies, enlightens, warms, soars on high; the Holy Ghost produces all these results in the Apostles. By these tongues He intimates that He chooses them to go and preach and kindle the flame of God's love in the hearts of men. He rested on them, "*seditque,*" to assure them He never would forsake them and would confirm them in grace. Let us wonder at these effects, let us congratulate the Apostles on receiving this gift, and pray that we may ourselves receive it.

Monday.

WHAT THE HOLY GHOST EFFECTED IN THE APOSTLES.

"They were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (ACTS ii. 4).

POINT I.—It is the Holy Ghost Who gives Himself. This Spirit is the **source and origin of all virtues,** all supernatural gifts. He, the personal and essential love of the Father and of the Son, gives Himself to them, unites Himself to them in a very special manner, ennobling them and making them children of God. What a happiness and glory for them! Let us also desire these advantages, for He comes for our sake also. Let us often say to Him with lively faith and ardent desire: "*Come, Holy Ghost.* We offer our hearts to Thee, do Thou take possession of and sanctify them, that they may become worthy of Thee."

POINT II.—They who receive the Holy Ghost are the Apostles and the disciples. They are all ignorant, weak and despicable in the eyes of the world: yet God does not despise them. They are **humble, devout, fervent**; this is what He sets store by, not on brilliant gifts: *"On the poor* *and little shall My Spirit rest"* (ISAIAS lxvi. 2). The Holy Ghost communicates Himself day by day to the faithful who possess these three dispositions, fervor, devotion, humility: let us, too, strive to acquire them.

POINT III.—**They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.** They had received Him before, since they were just; but now they are filled with Him. Their minds superabound with a wondrous light, their hearts glow with love, they are laden with supernatural graces and gifts, are more intimately united to God and full of a longing desire to please Him. Let us ponder over our poverty and the need we have of these heavenly treasures. Let us say to the Holy Ghost: *"Come, Thou Father of the poor! Come, O Giver of good gifts."*

Tuesday.

ON THREE EFFECTS WHICH THE HOLY GHOST PRODUCED IN THE APOSTLES.

POINT I.—The descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles was a baptism of fire: *"You shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."* **He cleansed them from their sins,** and freed them from the punishment due to sin; delivered them from the thraldom of the devil, from concupiscence and vicious inclinations; filled them with grace, bestowed on them infused virtues and changed them into new men breathing only the love of God. After having reflected on our pitiable state and on the need we have of being similarly changed, let us entreat our Blessed Savior to work such-like conversion in us through His Holy Spirit, as the fruit of His labors.

POINT II.— The Apostles were **filled with zeal for the interests of their Master.** They preached Him without fearing persecution, torture, or death; they spread over the face of the world to make Him known, loved and served. Let us be ashamed of our slackness in God's service and beseech the Apostles to obtain for us some portion of the zeal which animated them.

POINT III.— Under the influence of the Holy Ghost **they spoke all tongues.** Let us marvel at this gift, so necessary to the Apostles, who were to preach to all nations, and learn that it is the Holy Ghost, and not mere vanity, rivalry, or self-interest, that makes them speak; that it is of God they speak, of His majesty and munificence; that they speak with love, zeal and the divine blessing. Let us ask the Holy Ghost to rule our mind, our heart and our tongue by such ghostly principles of conduct.

Wednesday.

WHAT THE APOSTLES DID TO RESTORE THE HONOR OF JESUS CHRIST.

POINT I.— They restored it **in their own persons**, when, full of zeal and love, they preached publicly the Divinity of Him Whom from faint-heartedness they had abandoned and denied through weakness. They were ready to suffer all things for His sake; all suffered joyfully and died for His cause; truly their faults were fully atoned. Let us make up for ours by loving Our Lord and laboring and suffering for Him in proportion as we have offended Him.

POINT II.— They re-established the good name of our Divine Redeemer **in the city of Jerusalem**, proclaiming the risen glory of Him Who had but so lately been crucified, causing Him to be worshiped in the very places where He had been covered with ignominy and procuring Him as many true followers as there had once been blasphemers. Let us congratulate the infant Church on the blessing of its conversion, the Apostles on the success of their labors, Jesus Christ on the glory achieved for Him through the Holy Ghost.

POINT III.— They restored the good fame of Jesus Christ **among all the nations of the earth.** When our Savior was crucified at the Feast of the Passover, there were strangers present from all countries, who would carry back to their fatherland the news of the ignominious death of Jesus. Now, at the feast of Pentecost there were, in like manner, people of all nations, who learnt through the Apostles the Resurrection, the glorified Life and the Divinity of Christ and would take back with them the message to their own country. Thither the Apostles soon followed them, in order to make them adore their Master in all those places. Let us be quickened with a holy zeal to make Jesus known, loved, worshiped and served.

Thursday.

ON THE HOLY LIFE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS.

POINT I.— The early Christians, whom St. Luke praises so highly, were holy persons **detached from the love of the world**; they walked in the narrow way of the gospel; gave up their possessions or bestowed the value on the poor; were of one heart in the love of God and of one mind in the love of each other: *"few in number, indeed, but faithful in very truth,"* says St. Cyril. This little band was worth more than the vast host of people in our own day, who care for earthly things alone, and negligent in the service of God and maintain perpetual strife and enmities with their neighbors. Let us deplore such hateful laxity and recall to mind the fervor of the first Christian converts.

POINT II.— The motives which prompted and preserved such holiness in them were **the grace**

of their calling, the example of Jesus Christ still fresh in their memory and the magnificence of His promises. We have the self-same motives; wherefore do they not exercise the like power over us as they did over these early Christians?

POINT III.— The means which produced such holiness in them, and after producing, kept it in vigor, were assiduity in learning from the Apostles **the maxims and teaching of the gospel,** frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist and constant prayer. Christians nowadays are guided by the laws and maxims of the world; they care not to go to Holy Communion, pray but seldom, and then only badly; whence proceeds the disorder of their life. Let us for the same motives, and by the like means, aim at imitating the fervor of those early Christians.

Friday.

ON THE EFFECTS WHICH SANCTIFYING GRACE PRODUCES IN US.

POINT I.— By the sanctifying grace the Holy Ghost sheds in our hearts, He makes us **children of God.** *"You have received the spirit of adoption"* (ROM. viii. 15). Grace is the seal of our nobility, the efficient cause of our sharing the Divine Nature: *"That you may be made partakers of the Divine Nature,"* says St. Peter (2, i. 4). Let us glory in this dignity and carefully preserve our title to it and give to God our Father the honor, love and allegiance that this lofty distinction demands.

Point II.— Grace makes us **the heirs of God:** *"If sons, heirs also"* (Rom. viii. 17). It is the precious pledge of that inheritance beyond compare, which God our Father has prepared for us: *"the pledge of our inheritance"* (Eph. i. 14). Let us hence look on heaven as an heirloom we cannot fail to obtain if we be willing to renounce self; let this hope comfort us; let us do nothing that can deprive us of it and be filled with courage to perform the little that God exacts from us, so that He may confer this grace upon us.

Point III.— Grace **gives us the friendship of God:** *"I have called you friends"* (St. John xv. 15). Ennobled by grace and made partakers of the divinity, God becomes our friend. On His side He gladly fulfills all conditions that friendship demands. He is faithful, liberal, tender, true to the end. We, on our part, should not fail to return what is due to such a friend; should love Him tenderly; prefer Him to all the false friends in the world; converse with Him as often as may be and die rather than break off so unspeakably glorious a friendship: *"Who shall separate us from the love of God?"* (Rom. viii. 32).

Saturday.

THE INSPIRATIONS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

POINT I.—"**The Spirit breatheth where He will**" (ST. JOHN iii. 8). His inspirations depend not on ourselves; and when once they have ceased, they may perhaps never return. We often pay no regard to inspirations that come back again no more. What a misfortune would it be were we to neglect inspirations of such vital import that our salvation depends upon them! Let us then be more solicitous than we have hitherto been to profit by such precious gifts.

POINT II.—"**And thou hearest His voice.**" You have often heard the voice of the Holy Ghost. He has been reproaching you for a long time with your frequent falling off, with your negligence in practicing some virtue; why do you not lend ear to Him more attentively or, if you listen to Him, why are you not more ready to obey His voice? The reason is that either your dissipated mind prevents you from hearing Him, or else your listlessness of soul hinders you from obeying Him. Pause then from time to time amid your business, to hearken to Him with greater heed: arm yourself with courage to follow His inspirations: apart from this, there is every cause for you to harbor fear.

POINT III.—"**But thou knowest not whence He cometh or whither He goeth.**" The Spirit of God has designs upon us which are of greater consequence than we realize. What he desires us to avoid may in itself, perhaps, not be bad; but still it may cause us to fall into sin; such sin may possibly be the beginning of a bad habit, and such habit may lead to hardness of heart and to final impenitence. What the Holy Spirit inspires us to do may in itself be a small matter; but such mere trifle may lead to something greater on which depends, it may be, our perfection and happiness. Let us therefore obey the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, since His teachings can have but one result — our eternal happiness.

Feast of the Most Holy Trinity.

POINT I.— In heaven the adorable Trinity will be a mystery no longer. We shall **behold the triune God as He is,** without veil or figure, and this sight will be the cause of our happiness: "*To see, is the height of bliss.*" To seek to fathom this mystery would be a rash endeavor: "*To scrutinize, the height of rashness.*" We must with a lively faith adore God in Three Persons, must serve and love Him. It is God Himself Who has revealed Himself to us, we must believe in Him; we have numberless motives to confirm a Catholic in his faith: "*The Christian's Creed is Faith.*"

POINT II.— The offices the Three Divine Persons assume in our regard **fill us with confidence.** The Father is our Creator, and He loves the work of His hands. The Son is our Redeemer, and He wishes not to lose those whom He has redeemed. The Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier, and He longingly desires our sanctification and everlasting happiness. Let us animate ourselves with a never-failing hope.

POINT III.— In order to rouse us lovingly to serve the most holy Trinity, let us think of God as **ever intent on serving us** through all created things. The Father, by His power, infuses life, maintains it and enables every creature to act. The Son, by His wisdom, directs this marvelous agency. The Holy Spirit, by His goodness, refers everything to a perfect end, namely, to His glory and our benefit. Who will withhold love from a God wholly bent on manifesting His love to us?

Monday.

ON THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

POINT I.— The attribute of holiness is that **wherein God takes chiefest delight.** It is by proclaiming His Holiness that men bless Him on earth and angels praise Him in heaven: *"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty"* (APOC. iv. 8). Let us ask ourselves if holiness be the quality we prize most and seek most eagerly to attain.

POINT II.— The holiness of God consists in this, that **His** thoughts, designs and **actions are regulated by the Supreme Reason,** which is

Himself: *"The Lord is . . . holy in all His works"* (PSALM cxliv. 17). Holiness alone is what God esteems, loves and rewards: He hates and punishes nothing but sin, which is adverse to His holiness. Let us examine if our thoughts, plans and acts are holy, and if they are worthy of the esteem, love and reward of Almighty God.

POINT III.— **Weakness, ignorance** and **malice** are the **cause of our sins.** In God, there are three principles exclusive of these: infinite power in the Father, infinite wisdom in the Son, infinite goodness in the Holy Ghost: these three principles of holiness render God essentially impeccable. Let us acknowledge our weakness, ignorance and malice. Let us beg of the adorable Trinity to strengthen, enlighten and fill us with His holy love.

Tuesday.

ON THE ALMIGHTY POWER OF GOD.

POINT I.— **God is able to do all things of Himself alone,** He achieves whatever He wills to do; willing and doing are in God one and the same thing. Let us adore and praise this infinite power and strive to render it propitious to us.

POINT II.— God can do all things **through the feeblest of His creatures;** to them nothing is impossible when they act by the power of God. A mere man stays the course of the sun, draws water from a rock, opens a path through the sea, heals the sick, raises the dead to life, through the power of God. Let us conjure this wondrous power to perform a miracle still greater, that is, to change our heart, to curb our passions, to detach us from the world and from ourselves.

Point III.— The power of God works without ceasing **in the preservation of every being** and in the government of the whole world. To His power everything yields, Him everything obeys. Shall I alone prove rebellious to His commands? Because He has endowed me with free will, in order that I may serve Him in a more noble, worthy, and meritorious manner, should I be less submissive to Him? Ever since I first appeared in the world, He has been acting in me and through me; and I am still not wholly His! Employ all Thy power, O my God, to conquer my hardness of heart and to change my ungrateful soul.

Wednesday.

On the Lovableness of God.

Point I.— The character, noble qualities and worthy behavior of some people make them attractive in our eyes, albeit they may not have rendered us any service. How lovable would God seem to me, did I really **strive to know the perfections of so good a Father,** Who day by day lavishes on me fresh favors, and Who in an eminent degree possesses all the goodness, loveliness and other perfections I admire in mere creatures and which delight my heart!

POINT II.— Worldly-minded people apprehend not how delightful it is to love God; the saintly assure me that the **love of God is full of fascination** and that its charm makes all other joys insipid. Shall I then give faith to worldlings who deny what they have no knowledge of, rather than to fervent Christians who speak from their own experience? I wish to have personal experience. Detach me from all things of earth, O my God, and attach me solely to Thyself!

POINT III.— **Taste and see how sweet is the Lord!** Alas! I have tasted but too often of the pleasures of the world; shall the sweetness of loving God be the only one I am never to enjoy? No, my God, I yearn to love Thee, at whatever cost; the pleasures that have made me so unhappy have already caused me too much suffering. Why should I be afraid that it would cost me too much to enjoy that alone true and solid delight which is the cause of our soul's happiness in this world and in the next? *"All is vanity save to love God."*

Feast of Corpus Christi.

ON THE INSTITUTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

POINT I.— **Our Savior, at the close of His life, shows us greater love than ever.** He must return to His Father; yet He longs to remain here with us. His wisdom shows Him the means of doing this, and His love causes Him to recur to them. At the very time when men were preparing to make Him feel to the full their most deadly hate, He gives proof of the most ardent love that can possibly exist. Out of pure love He bestows Himself, in order to unite Himself with them in the most loving way conceivable. After having marveled at all that took place in the institution of this mystic rite, let us pour out our thanks to Our Lord for this overwhelming evidence of His love.

POINT II.— Before yielding up His Body as a sacrifice on the Cross, He immolates it in the Eucharist, and, abolishing all previous sacrifices, He institutes that of His Body and His Blood, to be on our altars a perpetual holocaust, the propitiatory and **Eucharistic Sacrifice of Christians,** a sacrifice of impetration, to continue to the end of the world. Let us offer it to God with the reverence, tenderness, and devotion it demands.

POINT III.— Our Lord instituted the Eucharist **as a Sacrifice** to honor God, **and as a Sacrament** to sanctify man. It is hereby that uniting

Himself with His faithful ones, He loads them with graces, lights, fervor, and consolation. He makes Himself a pledge of their resurrection and everlasting happiness.

Let us profit by this wondrous gift and by the loving designs of Him from whom we receive it.

Friday.

ON THREE EFFECTS WHICH THE HOLY EUCHARIST PRODUCES IN US.

POINT I.— It is **a source of honor.** Our Blessed Lord becomes through His adorable Sacrament the companion of our pilgrimage, feeds us with His Body and Blood, unites us to Himself and transforms us into Himself. What supreme glory for a Christian! Every Catholic is more holy and consecrated than churches and altars, than chalices and sacred vessels. He is lifted up above all human grandeur. Let us approach Jesus with ardent desire, and when through this most honorable union He shall have sanctified us, let us never desecrate ourselves by any unworthy act.

POINT II.— It is **a source of strength** against the passions which Our Lord tempers and weakens by His presence; against the devil, who looks upon a Christian after receiving Communion as a roaring lion which terrifies him; against death, which Jesus sweetens by His presence, grace and holy hope. Whence comes, then, so much weakness in us who communicate so often?

Point III.— It is a source of joy. The saints were filled with rapture after receiving their God. The Eucharist is compared to luscious milk, to the bread of angels, a wedding-feast, a manna; it is a foretaste of paradise, an overflow of its eternal delights. The lights which a soul receives, the sweetness it feels and the hope it conceives, render all the satisfaction of the senses and of the world insipid. Let us renounce all such gratifications, and we shall enjoy the delights experienced by the saints.

Saturday.

"He has set up a memorial of His wonders."

Point I.— The Holy Eucharist is a memorial of all the great mysteries of our religion; of our redemption, whereof it is the showing forth; of our sanctification, of which it is through grace the source and principle; of our glorification, of which it is the pledge. Let us profit by the loving intentions our dear Lord has manifested in all these mysteries and which He hourly manifests in the Blessed Eucharist.

Point II.— It is a memorial or a compendium of the miracles God has worked in the creation and redemption of the world. Jesus Christ works the miracle of producing Himself without limit, at all times and in all places; He changes the bread and wine, preserving the accidents without any subject. In like manner, He imparts life, preserves from death, drives out the devil, converts souls. Let us deepen our faith in these mysteries; let us adore this miraculous power; let us thank Him Who exercises it out of unbounded love for us.

Point III.— It is a memorial of the virtues which Jesus practiced during His life and at His death. Let us marvel at His deep humility, heroic patience, exact obedience, complete mortification, piety and zeal for the glory of His Father, charity towards man. He is now in the Eucharist, as He was during His life, our Physician, Shepherd, Comforter, Father and Redeemer. Let us implore Him to give us these virtues and to exercise these offices in our behalf.

Second Sunday after Pentecost.

On the Eucharistic Feast.

"A certain man made a great supper"
(St. Luke xiv. 16).

Point I.— He who prepares the feast is God Himself. He thought of it from all eternity, He made it ready at the close of His life, and He continues it till the end of time. What exceeding honor for us! If a king were to invite us to his table, we should consider ourselves more than fortunate; and yet he could give us but ordinary food, which would never confer any claim to royalty, and would preserve us neither from illness nor from death. God, however, does all this to give us life eternal. Let us thank Him for His loving purposes.

Point II.— **The viands supplied** at this feast **are divine.** Jesus gives us His Body to eat and His Blood to drink; the Godhead is not divided from the Body and Blood; our soul is nourished and, as it were, fattened on the very substance of God Himself: *Anima de Deo saginatur.* Spiritual lights, fervor, sweet consolations, accompany this precious food. Had God disclosed His plan to the angels, they would have been lost in wonder; they would have envied our happy lot. They never name God without awe: we have the honor of receiving Him as our spiritual sustenance.

Point III.— **God invites with a goodness that is** simply **astounding,** the healthy, the sick, nay even the dead in sin, if wishful to return to new life; the just, in order to increase grace in them, to confirm them in it, to perfect them; the lukewarm, in order to give them fervor, purify, and strengthen them; sinners who wish to be converted, in order to give them life anew. In whatever state we may be, let us hasten eagerly to this divine repast; let us never excuse ourselves; let us go to it with becoming dispositions in order to pay honor to the Master of the feast.

Monday.

ON THE LOVE OUR LORD SHOWS IN THE INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST.

POINT I.— It was **His love for us** that **caused Him to institute this Sacrament.** He was about to withdraw from us His sensible presence by His ascension into heaven, but that He may be still in our midst, He abides in the Blessed Sacrament, so as to remain with us throughout our pilgrimage, to console, love, nourish and protect us. Should we not then abide with Him as much as possible, converse with Him, praise Him, make known to Him our needs, and thank Him for His graces? Let us be more regular in our visits to our Redeemer in the Sacrament of His love.

POINT II.— Our Blessed Lord is in the Eucharist that **He may unite Himself to us in holy Communion,** and this is indeed the great test of His love. *"He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in Him"* (ST. JOHN vi. 57), He tells us. *Efficimur unum corpus et una caro,* says St. Chrysostom; *"We are made one Body and one flesh."* Can we imagine a more ardent love? What an honor for me, after having received my Lord, to be able to address Him as if He were my equal and of like substance with myself: *O Deus, substantia mea!* My passions carry me away, temptations disturb me ever. Rid Thyself, O my God, of the troubles they cause Thee, by delivering me from them.

POINT III.— **In order to be with us in the Blessed Sacrament,** our dear Lord has exposed Himself to the fury of heretics, to the malignity of the Jews, to sacrilegious Communions, to the want of piety in bad Catholics. His love for us made Him resolve to bear all these indignities; and yet we cannot suffer anything for Him! Dare we then profess that we love Him?

Tuesday.

ON THE GENTLENESS AND FAMILIARITY OF JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST.

POINT I.— Our Blessed Lord during His mortal life **invited all kinds of persons** to come to Him; He rejected no one, He spoke, taught, and relieved every one with marvelous kindness. He shows still greater goodness in the Eucharist; He invites every one; He receives the sick, the poor, the learned, the ignorant, those of high and low degree. When on earth, He allowed them to come near Him: now He enters into us in a hidden manner, that He may work secretly within us that which He worked manifestly during His life. Ought we not then to love and serve Him and to profit by His goodness?

POINT II.— He allows Himself to be borne through the streets; **He enters the houses of the** poor and wretched; He is exposed on the altar to receive the prayers of all the faithful, and that, without cost to us, in some poor village church, in a Ciborium of scarce any value, often left unattended, without worshipers, without visitors, always ready to go wherever He is wanted, to give Himself to all who desire to receive Him. Yet we are unmoved by such astonishing goodness and are filled with pride and contempt for others!

Point III.— Far from diminishing anything of the respect and veneration which we owe Him, this familiarity and condescension of Our Savior should **increase our awe and reverence,** seeing the loving-kindness of His infinite Majesty. "Alas! what am I," said David, "that I should contract a royal alliance?" *"Who am I, and what is my life?"* (1 Kings xviii. 18). *"Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?"* said St. Elizabeth. Let us say the same, and may the gentleness of our great God win our confidence and increase our respect.

Wednesday.

ON THE WORDS OF THE CHURCH: "O SACRUM CONVIVIUM!"

Point I.— In this sacred banquet **Jesus Christ is received.** He bestows Himself on us, gives His Body, Blood and Divinity to be the food of our souls. What can He refuse us when

He gives Himself? Let us excite in ourselves a lively faith and fill our hearts with boundless confidence.

Point II.— **The remembrance of the Passion is renewed.** Jesus Christ was offered upon the Cross as a bloody sacrifice and He offered Himself with such love that He desires to be sacrificed anew every day and many times each day, dying upon our altars through this mystic commemoration. He remains, too, in the Tabernacle, as a Victim offered continually to honor God, to appease Him, to prefer requests to Him, to thank Him. Let us offer up this victim for all these intentions.

Point III.— **The soul is filled with grace.** Jesus Christ is the source of all grace. He is personally present in our soul. He abates the violence of our passions and vicious propensities. He increases sanctifying grace and by His actual graces fills our mind with light and our will with holy affections of love and fervor. How comes it to pass that we receive Holy Communion often and are not saints?

Point IV.— **We receive a pledge of our future glory.** Jesus Christ gives Himself to us hidden beneath these veils. He unites Himself to us, and changes us into Himself, in order to assure us that heaven is our own and that this union will last for ever: He gives Himself as a pledge to our souls, and to confer on our bodies the warrant of our resurrection. This is indeed the bread of immortality: *immortalitatis alimonia.*

Thursday.

WHENCE COMES IT THAT WE PROFIT SO LITTLE BY HOLY COMMUNION.

POINT I.— Very many Christians remain after frequent Communions **as imperfect as before**; are lukewarm, sensual, passionate, ambitious. They wrong grievously this adorable Sacrament in thus rendering it profitless; they wrong themselves by suffering loss of the fruit of their Communions; become a cause of scandal to others, and expose themselves to very great evils. Let us dread the ills inevitably following fruitless Communions. Let us be alarmed lest they become sacrilegious.

POINT II.— The first reason why we gather so little fruit is that we **bring not to Holy Communion what Our Lord requires.** He wishes us to receive with pure intention, with a heart detached from all sin, with a soul duly prepared to receive Him. Yet we approach with imperfect intentions, out of custom or interested motive, from human respect, with a heart attached to the sins we continually confess and do not resolve to amend; with a soul ill-prepared, a mind distracted, a heart preoccupied and a head dizzy with business and amusements. Let us put far away from us such unworthy dispositions.

POINT III.— A further reason why our Communions bear so little fruit is that we **do not carry away** from them **what Our Lord intends** we should. We scarcely yield Him a hurried moment to thank Him, converse with Him and profit by His glorious presence. He suggests to us what we ought to do, yet we do it not. We make promises to Him, but keep them not. After our consecration we degrade ourselves. Live holily, *ante, ut dignus fias accipiendi; postmodum, ut dignus videaris qui acceperis,* is the advice of St. Chrysostom. Live holily, he writes, before Communion, that you may become worthy to receive; after Communion, that all may have proof how worthy you were to receive.

Friday.

ON DEVOTION TO THE HEART OF JESUS.

POINT I.— We honor, and with reason, everything connected with Jesus Christ, His Cross, His crown of thorns, His sacred Wounds; what homage ought we not to render to His Sacred Heart, which was the **principal organ of His sufferings** and is the chief source of our happiness! This Sacred Heart has been an object of devotion to the greatest saints and is so still to the holiest of our own time. Is it possible for us to remain indifferent to this Heart, which contains everything that is holy, beautiful and acceptable in God's sight?

POINT II.— On earth, this Sacred Heart was **occupied solely with our salvation.** In the Eucharist Jesus still takes delight in abiding with us, and by His grace in imparting Himself to us in Holy Communion. From high heaven He protects us in our needs, recalls us when we go astray, receives us when we come back to Him and loves us when we continue faithful to Him. Since He so earnestly longs to be the God of our heart, let us be worshipers of His Heart.

POINT III.— Solid devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus consists in the steadfast **imitation of** His sentiments and **His virtues.** Let us imitate His love for His Father and His zeal for His glory, His patience, His charity to others, His humility, poverty and modesty; to do this is what most honors Him and what has power to merit His greatest favors. Let us beg Jesus to fill us with these sentiments, let us not place any obstacle in the way, but make use of opportunities of putting them in practice.

Saturday.

ON THE INTERIOR LIFE.

POINT I.— **An interior life is one of recollection** of mind and heart, of continual return upon oneself, of frequent lifting the heart to God. Without such inner life, we act oftentimes without a right intention and from a mere human motive. How many profitless actions do we perform! Without such interior life we do not correspond with God's graces and designs in our regard, and we shall never attain the perfection

He requires of us. What a heavy account for me to render, seeing that God loads me with graces so manifold every day of my life!

POINT II.— Dissipation of mind, unfaithfulness to God's graces, the gratification of the senses and **the cravings of self-love are the obstacles to the interior life.** Let us be careful to avoid them, and live a life of recollectedness, being ever attentive and docile to the inspirations of God and ever seeking detachment from ourselves and things created; thus shall we live an interior life and be true Christians.

POINT III.— **An interior life uplifts us to the** knowledge and **love of God**; it unites us to God and makes us live in God and for God; it forms Jesus Christ in us, it makes us live by His spirit and by His example. Happy is the person who is aware of the importance and advantages of such inner life! Happier still is he who strives to live it. *"Living to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Third Sunday after Pentecost.

THE GOODNESS OF JESUS CHRIST IN RECEIVING SINNERS.

POINT I.— **Sinners drew near to Jesus, attracted by His goodness.** They considered Him as the One Who had the power to cleanse away their sins, and give them strength to sin no more. It is to Him we should go when our conscience reproaches us with actual offense, makes us fear the judgments of God for past sins, or humbles us at thought of want of perseverance in grace. Jesus will pardon our sins, will remit the penalty we have deserved and give the grace needed to strengthen our weakness.

POINT II.— **Our Blessed Lord received sinners with wondrous kindness.** He had come for their sake, He desired their conversion by giving His Blood and His Life for them. Could then He receive them otherwise than kindly when they went to Him? Let us own to Him, but with confidence, that we are sinners, great sinners; He will receive us with gladness and will show that He loves and wishes to save us.

POINT III.— The Scribes and Pharisees condemned the behavior of Jesus; they said that he kept not strictly to the letter of the law; that His morality was lax, that **by His mildness He countenanced the guilt of sinners.** Pride and the desire of notoriety made them speak thus, but not true zeal. Let us ponder the holy conduct of Jesus Christ and conform our own to it. He will protect us against the affected severity and indiscreet zeal of His enemies.

Monday.

On the Lost Sheep.

Point I.— The loss of a soul begins often **by slight** and all but imperceptible **failings.** A sheep runs after a tuft of grass that tempts it; lingers by it, while the shepherd and the flock move off to some other spot, and so it begins to stray. In like manner, through what would seem to be almost involuntary slips of weakness or surprise, we begin to leave the presence of God. These slight faults are presages of greater sins which follow them, even as lassitude precedes serious illness. Let us be on our guard against the slightest approach of evil.

Point II.— **Negligence about correcting ourselves** and avoiding voluntary faults hastens on our ruin. The sheep finds pleasure in remaining apart from the shepherd and the flock; it perceives the shepherd going away, yet neither fears being left somewhat aloof, nor the danger to which it is gradually exposing itself. This is just what we do day by day; we commit faults, confess them without sorrow and without resolute purpose to amend them, and we commit them again and again, almost without scruple. Very perilous is such a state.

Point III.— Finally, the sheep, by reason of its isolation, falls into some ditch, where it gets entangled among bushes and briars, whence it cannot extricate itself without the shepherd's special help and where it runs risk of being devoured alive. **Some grievous sin,** or some great lapse, **follows upon our negligence,** and we shall never put ourselves straight without a special exercise of God's mercy. Let us foresee our possible ruin, and say to God: *"I have strayed like a sheep that has perished; seek Thy servant."*

Tuesday.

ON THE SHEPHERD WHO SEEKS FOR THE LOST SHEEP.

POINT I.— The shepherd **feels the loss of the sheep,** and regrets it, because he greatly loves it; it is his beloved sheep, since it is his property, his treasure, and he is conscience that it is in danger of being carried off by some robber or of being devoured by some wild beast. These are some of the manifold reasons why our going away gives pain to the Sacred Heart. We should find it hard to believe how much He grieves over us, did He not Himself assure us thereof through His prophets and in His gospel.

POINT II.— The shepherd **seeks his sheep anxiously,** moved with an earnest wish to find it; he searches in every direction, calls it, hurries after it, climbs every rock, searches every bush, wades every stream, toils, exerts himself until out of breath, yet all his labor appears to him sweet because of his longing to find the sheep. The whole parable brings vividly before our mind a part of what Jesus has accomplished in our behalf and what He is still occupied in doing day after day. Let us satisfy His yearning to possess us and profit by His anxious care.

Point III.— What a happiness for the shepherd **if he but find his sheep!** He does not maltreat it; on the contrary, he caresses it, places it on his shoulders and bears it homeward to the fold; he cannot contain his joy, but makes it known to all and wishes to be congratulated by all. Let us cast ourselves trustfully into the arms of our kind Shepherd. Let us be ashamed at having so often left Him, and let us hold in detestation our repeated wanderings. *"I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost"* (Psalm cxviii. 176). Let us beseech Jesus to preserve us from them in future. *"Suffer me not to be separated from Thee."*

Wednesday.

On the Pearl of Great Price.

Point I.— A **woman loses one of her jewels,** a precious stone, or a pearl of great price. We, whom Jesus Christ has ransomed with His blood, are His pearls and precious stones: *Pretiosa monilia Christi,* says St. Cyprian. He has bought us very dearly; He wishes us to be His jewels in heaven. We should regard souls in this light, that we may conceive the true zeal that will make us labor for their salvation.

Thus should we, at least, think of our own soul, that we may rouse ourselves to take exceeding great care of it. "*Why art thou so vile in thine own eyes who art so precious in those of Christ?*"

POINT II.— The woman, in order to recover the jewel, throws the whole house into disorder; she searches everywhere, **summons to her aid servants,** relatives and friends. Jesus confers on us great honor when He confides souls to us that we may hold them safe, or may find them again should they have gone astray. Let us spare neither care nor labor for this purpose; all our endeavors will be liberally rewarded.

POINT III.— There is **rejoicing** throughout the house when **the woman has found her jewel**; her joy breaks forth in public; she is very grateful to the person who found it. The Church on earth and the angels in heaven are filled with joy when a soul returns from sin to grace. God loves tenderly those who bring that soul back to Him, while the person converted will be everlastingly grateful. Merchants cross the sea in search of pearls and jewels; should we do nothing to win souls to God, to Whom they are of infinite value?

Thursday.

On the Blindness of the Sinner.

Point I.—The blindness of the sinner is great beyond all conception. By yielding himself up to sin, he **reduces himself to the most pitiful poverty**; loses the friendship of God; His graces and His rewards; loses eternal happiness and all the merit of the good works he has ever performed. What could I have been thinking of to commit that sin which has brought me to so wretched a condition? What am I thinking of now, if I do not labor to repair the harm which I have done myself by sin?

Point II.—The sinner **sacrifices all to obtain** nothing. All the kingdoms of the earth and all the pleasures of the world could never make up to me for the loss of God. How great has been my folly in renouncing my God for a passing gain, a frivolous pleasure, a breath of honor, a mad act of revenge, a vain satisfaction, which I have ceased to enjoy, which can never content me, but which may entail never-ending misery.

Point III.—It is a terrible misfortune to the sinner to have lost God, a great confusion to have lost Him for nothing; but what is still more deplorable is **our insensibility to this loss.** Such is the condition of a large number of sinners who think only of their money, or their pleasure, instead of trembling at the frightful state of their consciences. Have I not myself lived in this state of insensibility? Am I not in it still? Let us fear sin, which is able to blind and harden us to this extent.

Friday.

ON THE MERCY OF GOD.

POINT I.— **God is merciful and just.** He causes His mercy to shine forth in all parts of the earth and at every successive moment, by His patience in recalling, seeking for and bearing with sinners. On the other hand, He seldom shows His justice, and His goodness appears even in examples of the justice He exercises in order to punish us, to warn us, or to correct us. What would have become of me had God treated me as I deserved?

POINT II.— However great our sins may be, we must **never despair of God's mercy**: He forgives everything when we turn to Him sincerely; but, however great the mercy of God may be, we must never presume upon it so far as to continue in our wickedness. God is ready to pardon me to-day, to-morrow perhaps I shall have fallen into the hands of His justice. What can I complain of if I abuse His goodness? O my God! forgive me all the abuse I have made of Thy mercies: so far they have served only as a pretext for offending Thee. Henceforth I desire to make them the great motive of my sorrow and of my love for Thee.

Saturday.

On the Lost Groat.

Point I.— The woman spoken of in the gospel **lights her lamp** in order to search for the money she has lost. When it is a question of some temporal loss, we ask for information, seek advice, and consult such as are able to throw light on our difficulties. How happy should we be were we to act thus in the matter of our salvation! The light of grace and of faith, our reading of pious books and listening to the instruction given us would help to repair our losses; but we neglect all these; hence it is not surprising that we are so impoverished in the sight of God, since every day we lose so much, and know not how to repair the loss.

Point II.— This woman, in order to find her groat, disarranges all her furniture and **sweeps her whole house.** How can the voice of God penetrate our hearts so long as they are filled with frivolous attachments and the evil courses of the world? Let us detach ourselves from earthly things and from ourselves; then shall we receive the Spirit of God, Who will give us a disgust of the world, and cause us to recover that peace of heart which makes the joy and happiness of all holy people.

Point III.— The woman **seeks without ceasing** for her groat until she finds it. We have tasted at certain moments the relish of virtue; but because it became needful to do violence to ourselves in order to resist the deceitful charms of the world and the allurements of our passions, we have given up everything. What cowardice! In worldly things we succeed in nothing without effort and yet would be saints without having to do any violence to ourselves! Let us be more persistent in corresponding to the movements of grace. Grace will strengthen and quicken us and, in the end, render even pleasant what at first we thought difficult.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

"Launch out into the deep" (St. Luke v. 4).

Point I.—Our Lord uses these words to remind us that we ought **continually to advance** in holiness and in the perfection of our state of life. In order to arrive at this we must wash away even the smallest sins, must keep our passions in check, resist our evil inclinations, acquire all the virtues of our vocation, practice acts of these virtues, animate our whole life with holy intentions, unite ourselves to Jesus Christ by love and imitation and must labor uninterruptedly and perseveringly to become perfect: *"as also your heavenly Father is perfect"* (St. Matt. v. 48). Let us acknowledge that much still remains to be done, since we have scarcely begun as yet. Let us condemn our past negligence.

Point II.—The **difficulty** is great, yet it **should not alarm us**: with God's grace we are able to do all things. God Himself, it is true, will co-operate in this great work; but we must work jointly with Him: *"Not I, but the grace of God with me"* (1 Cor. xv. 10). With God's help everything must be possible; through the sweetness which will accompany this help, everything will become pleasing to us.

Point III.— Whatever progress we may have made in the way of such perfection, we should bear in mind that, sailing on a stormy sea, we shall be **continually exposed to winds** and tempests; we shall always have difficulties to overcome, temptations to surmount, enemies to battle with, and shall always be falling into faults. Far from being discouraged by this, we ought to buffet the waves with fresh courage, inspirited by the presence of our dear Lord.

Monday.

"We have labored all the night, and have taken nothing" (St. Luke v. 5).

Point I.— **The life of worldlings is spent in the darkness** occasioned by want of faith and of meditation on the eternal truths and, furthermore, by the trouble and tumult of business overclouding the mind: *"There is none that considereth in the heart"* (Jeremias xii. 11). Let us pity those who live according to the maxims of the world, and thank God for His mercy in withdrawing us from darkness in order to place us in that clearness which will lead us to the splendors of eternal light: *"Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"* (1 St. Peter ii. 9).

Point II.—*Laborantes.* The life of the world is **full of moil:** *"They labored to work evil,"* says the Holy Spirit. They have *"wearied themselves in the way of iniquity"* (Wisd. v. 7); they are never satisfied; avarice, ambition, extravagant desires, griefs and anxieties harass them everywhere; such are the arduous paths of wickedness wherein they weary themselves; they might, if they wished, lead a sweet, tranquil, agreeable life, in working for God.

Point III.—*Nihil cepimus.* The life of the world is **unsatisfying**; we can gain nothing by it; all the possessions of the world are in themselves of little worth; they are nothing as compared with those of eternity. The most prosperous people in the world have only a very small portion of its good things; they scarcely have any time to enjoy them and at death will carry nothing away, in their hands will nothing remain. They will be like persons who in sleep dream that they are rich and who on waking find themselves in direst poverty; instead of which, they would have been rich for all eternity, had they but labored for God. Let us learn wisdom at their expense.

Tuesday.

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (St. Luke v. 8).

Point I.— Let us acknowledge before God as St. Peter did that we are sinners, and **very great sinners.** Well may we say this, since St. Paul declared that he was the chief of sinners: *Quorum primus ego sum* (1 Tim. i. 15). He thought of his own sins and felt their grievousness; the sins of others he knew only imperfectly and hence called himself the chief of sinners. In the like way, when we experience some pain, we say it is the greatest of all pains, because we are not feeling other kinds of pain. Let us apply this thought to ourselves and acknowledge God's mercy in our regard.

Point II.— Though our sins should all be pardoned, we must still **acknowledge that we are great sinners,** since, if left to ourselves, we should sin every moment, unless God prevented us by His grace. Our weakness is extreme; our inclinations, habits, passions are impetuous; let us humble ourselves at being in such a condition, the most humiliating of all.

Point III.— We are sinners; but let us beware of saying, as St. Peter said: **"Depart from me, O Lord."** *"Nay,"* says St. Gregory, *"if thou knowest thyself to be a sinner, thou must not drive away the Lord."* He it is Who alone can wash away our sins and preserve us from sinning, strengthening our weakness by His grace.

Let us then say to Him when we are praying in private, or at Mass, or at Communion: *"Come, Lord Jesus"* (Apoc. xxii. 20). His presence will be the remedy for the past, and a safeguard for the future.

Wednesday.

"The multitudes pressed upon Him, to hear the word of God" (St. Luke v. 1).

Point I.—A great many Christians know nothing of the greatness of God, the holiness of their religion, the consequences of vice, the advantages of virtue. They are sensual, passionate, ambitious and worldly, **because they neglect the word of God,** which would enlighten their minds and touch their hearts. Eagerness for the word of God is an augury of salvation: *"He that is of God, heareth the words of God"* (St. John viii. 47). On the other hand, distaste for the word of God is a sign of reprobation: *"Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God."*

Point II.—Some Christians hear the word of God and read it, **without becoming more humble-minded,** modest, charitable, pious; they discredit the holy word; they harm themselves, and scandalize others. If the word of God does not serve for our sanctification, it will serve for our condemnation: *"It shall not return to Me void"* (Isaias lv. 11). Let us fear the account which God will exact from us.

Point III.— In order to make a holy use of the word of God, **let us consider carefully how sublime it is.** It is the very word of God Himself, *verbum Dei:* the word of salvation and a means of sanctification, *verbum salutis;* a word of conversion and of reconciliation for sinners, *verbum reconciliationis;* a word of life, which supports, animates and encourages believers, *spiritus vitæ sunt.* Let us make these truths sink deeply into our souls, and we shall listen to the word of God with eagerness and reverence and shall practice it with courage and constancy.

Thursday.

"*We have labored all night, and have taken nothing*" (St. Luke i. 5).

Point I.— We labor much, and merit little, **because we do not labor holily.** In order that your labor may conduce to your salvation, offer it to God before entering upon it; do not act from interested motives, passion, custom, or with precipitation, but always in the sight of God and to please Him: "*In Thy name.*" In this way will you honor God and sanctify your soul.

Point II.— During your work, be afraid of temptations to **idleness, vanity, human respect and greed.** Think of God, Who is watching you and helping you; renew your offering, unite your labors to those of Jesus Christ. If you neglect such easy practices as these, it is because you have neither the glory of God, nor your own salvation, in your inmost heart.

Point III.— After your work, imitate St. Peter, who, when his fishing was ended, threw himself at the feet of Christ **to humble himself and to thank Jesus.** Humble yourself before God on account of the numberless faults you have committed during your work; thank Him for His help and for even the small amount of good which you have done, since it all proceeds from Him. What graces you will merit in this life and what rewards for eternity, if in your work you follow these precepts!

Friday.

"At Thy word I will let down the net"
(St. Luke v. 5).

Point I.— The Apostles, who had labored all the night and taken nothing, let down their nets **out of obedience,** when the fish they caught filled two ships. If I obeyed in this way, God would bless and reward my obedience; but my continual rejoinders to those who give me orders, my murmurings, my negligences, my irritations prompted by self-love should cause me to fear either that I have no obedience, or that I have only an obedience without merit. How much labor then without reward!

Point II.— **Obedience pays honor to God,** Whose authority we reverence in our superiors, and to Jesus Christ, Whose example we follow; it sanctifies ourselves, because it produces, maintains and perfects the other virtues, whereof it is the measure. Can anything touch my heart, if these many advantages fail to render obedience most grateful to me?

POINT III.— Provided my superiors enjoin me not to do anything contrary to the law of God, **I am sure** in obeying them **of doing His will.** Though what is prescribed be, in my opinion, but little regulated by the laws of reason, I am always reasonable in obeying, because I am doing the will of God. My perfection depends on the care I take to conform my will to His. Let us obey then perfectly, in order to arrive at the perfection which God demands from each of us.

Saturday.

"From henceforth thou shalt catch men"
(ST. LUKE v. 10).

POINT I.— Jesus Christ chose for His Apostles **men who were lowly** and ignorant, plying the humble craft of fishermen. He undertakes to convert the great ones of the world by means of the poor; the learned by the ignorant; and to sanctify the world by a few fishermen. Let us acknowledge and adore the almighty power of God in the success of this undertaking; let us thank Him for having called us to His holy

Church, in preference to so many others who would have served Him better than we do.

Point II.— The Apostles were called in different ways; but each **left everything and obeyed promptly**; *"Leaving all things, they followed Him"* (St. Luke v. 11). We should obey thus when convinced that God is speaking; grace has its moments, which often return not again.

Point III.— The Apostles obeyed and became the ministers of Jesus Christ, His friends, His confidants, vessels of election, **loaded with all the gifts of Heaven.** Could they have imagined that their obedience would be so abundantly rewarded? How happy should I be myself, had I always been docile to the voice of God! What harm have I not done myself by my undutifulness? Forgive it, O Lord, and help me to make it good.

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

"Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees" (St. Matt. v. 20).

Point I.— As Christians we are **bound to live more holily** than those who were under the Old Law. The New Covenant is more holy, the Lawgiver more noble, the recompense greater; the name of Christian, our Baptismal vows, the graces flowing from them, the Sacraments, the example of the good, all put us under an obligation to be holy. Let us be ashamed that flaws are sometimes evident in our life which would disgrace, not a Jew merely, but even an upright pagan.

POINT II.— Again, if we are **Religious, we have an additional obligation** to live more holily than other Christians. Our profession and state of life, so different from that of people in the world, the lights, the graces and other aids which accompany religious life, require this from us. What shall we say to God when He will point to Christians who, involved in the entanglements of the world, are more virtuous than we are with all our opportunities of recollectedness?

POINT III.— **There are other reasons** also, it would seem, why we are bound to live more holily than others; our name, our solemn promise to follow Jesus Christ, our aim — to labor solely for the sanctification of others — oblige us to be more holy than the rest; *"We ought more diligently to observe the things which we have heard"* (HEB. ii. 1). Such is the obligation Paul laid upon himself and his fellow-laborers. If we practice not with greater dutifulness what we tell others to do, God will indeed make use of us as instruments to communicate His gifts, but nothing will remain for our own benefit; we shall be like conduits that retain nothing, or like cisterns pierced with holes.

Monday.

"*Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees*" (St. Matt. v. 20).

Point I.— The **profession of holiness** in a state of life held in high respect **does not constitute sanctity.** The Scribes and Pharisees were ungodly in their sect, though they professed to be more holy than others. The name of Christian, of Religious, the habit we wear, the vows we have taken, will all serve only to make our sins more grievous, our punishment greater, our ruin more inexcusable.

Point II.— The semblance of virtue and holiness availed merely to turn the Scribes and Pharisees into thorough hypocrites. **God wishes to be served sincerely**; He is not content with exterior acts of virtue, if they be not animated by inward holiness; "*from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith*" (1 Tim. i. 5), as was constantly said to the early Christians, according to Tertullian. God desires to be worshiped "*in spirit and in truth.*" He rejects all other kind of service.

Point III.— Acts of virtue which have nothing but outside show may deceive men and gain their esteem, but this will be their only reward: "*They have received their reward*" (St. Matt. vi. 5). Such acts, indeed, deserve chastisement, since they proceed from vanity and hypocrisy. It is most criminal folly to lose the approval of God in order to gain that of men and, for so trifling a recompense, to deprive oneself of an eternal reward in heaven and to expose oneself to a terrible punishment. Let us then shrink from so great a misfortune.

Tuesday.

"Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger" (St. Matt. v. 22).

Point I.— Our Lord forbids us to cherish any feeling **in our heart contrary to brotherly love,** such as contempt, dislike, envy, bitterness, resentment, or any movement, however slight, harbored deliberately, of anger or revenge. Such spirit of animosity and bitterness of heart cloud the reason, drive peace and devotion out of the soul and cause numberless faults: *"The anger of man worketh not the justice of God"* (St. James i. 20). Let us search our conscience on this important point, particularly before Mass and Communion: *"If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar"* (St. Matt. v. 23).

Point II.— Our Lord forbids us, **in our words,** not only to give way to outbursts of wrath, slander, and abuse, but also to use cutting remarks and all expressions calculated to nettle or humble others when present, or to wound their honor when absent. Slander is to be feared in Religious even more than in those living in the world.

Point III.— Our Lord forbids us, **in our**

deeds, to do any bad turn to our neighbor, that is to harm him in any way, either personally or through others. If in our hearts we have charity, it will banish anger, will regulate our whole interior as well as our words and actions. When we love some one, we approve of all he ever does. We speak of it favorably, and it is a pleasure to do anything for him. Let us foster this charity: we shall then have very few sins with which to reproach ourselves.

Wednesday.

"*Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment*" (St. Matt. v. 22).

Point I.— **Anger banishes from our hearts the Spirit of God,** Who is a Spirit of gentleness and peace; it disfigures the image of God within us, by disturbing the light of reason; it outrages God by blasphemies and murmuring and usurps the rights of God by wreaking vengeance. Let us detest a vice so heinous, and withal so common; should we refuse to correct our own anger, let us fear that of God.

Point II.— Anger renders us **hateful to our neighbor.** Every one fears, every one avoids a hot-tempered man who flies into a rage on the slightest pretext. Every one grieves and is sad who is obliged to live with such an one. Far from proving useful to any one, his very look, his every word, his whole bearing, render him despicable and odious to every one. Let us then not fail to take the advice we should give to people of this character.

POINT III.— Anger is a sin **most injurious to him who is guilty of it.** He dishonors himself by his folly, irritating himself about trifles, or faults often imaginary, striving to remedy a slight mischief by a sin which is often very grievous; or persisting in his wrath in spite of his being in the wrong. Whatever may be the injury done to him by others, he does much greater harm to himself by his anger. To accustom oneself to this sin is to be a fool, says the Holy Spirit: *"Anger resteth in the bosom of a fool"* (ECCLES. vii. 10). Not to fear the numberless sins of which it causes the commission is verily to be hardened.

Thursday.

"Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment" (ST. MATT. v. 22).

POINT I.— If we are afraid of the judgments of God, **we should be in dread of anger,** which is so detestable in a Christian, and should strive to keep from it or to correct it in ourselves. In addition to prayer, and the right use of Sacraments in order to obtain help from heaven, we should watch over our heart and repress all movements of impatience the instant they arise. Avoid this sin we cannot, save by doing violence to ourselves.

Point II.— We are very far wrong in attributing our **impatience to extrinsic causes**; its source lies in our own heart. Were we not attached to ourselves, our own glory, our own interests, we should not fly into fits of passion. Let us learn to become more patient, humble-minded, unselfish, and we shall become more meek and gentle.

Point III.— If anger sometimes carry us away, let us avail ourselves of the advice we have so often received on the subject; let us not spare ourselves, but perform the penances which are imposed upon us and **punish ourselves severely** until we have corrected ourselves. All our confessions will not change our life, if we have not charity: *"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart"* (St. Matt. xi. 29).

Friday.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land" (St. Matt. v. 4).

Point I.— The meekness our Blessed Savior commends is not that which proceeds from natural disposition, nor from motives of policy, with the object of gaining popularity. It is a **virtue which restrains anger**, gives us true peace and calm within and reveals outwardly our humbleness of heart; which, far from seeking revenge, endures with patience and causes us to love those who do us harm. Let us examine into our behavior towards our superiors, our inferiors, our equals, and we shall perceive that we often fail in this virtue.

Point II.— Blessed are they who have this meekness, *"for they shall possess the land."* They shall possess themselves and shall be masters of their own hearts. They shall win the hearts of others: no quality is so winning as meekness. And lastly, they shall possess the land of the living, which is heaven, for which God created them.

Point III.— Meekness appeared in an eminent degree in Our Lord, and in this respect He offered Himself as our Model. During His Life and in His Passion, He showed in His own Person what the prophet had foretold, that He would not contend or cry out and that He would rather bear with the offensive smell of burning flax, than trample it under foot in order to extinguish it. Let us consider the beauty of this virtue in itself and in our Blessed Lord. Let us reflect how unlovely is the character of one who is surly, hot-headed, cross-grained, or turbulent. Let us therefore love meekness and avoid the opposite vice.

Saturday.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (St. Matt. v. 7).

Point I.— The merciful whom Our Lord calls blessed, are they who, through a truly Christian charity, are **touched with compassion** for the spiritual or corporal misery **of their neighbor,** who afford him whatever help they can and who forgive those who injure them. Have we these sentiments of mercy towards others? How do we give proof of their existence?

Point II.— They who are charitable and compassionate to others are blessed, because in the midst of the wretchedness with which they are surrounded in this life, **God comes to their relief,** and, through His great mercy, will forgive them their sins. Let us therefore aim at this happiness.

Point III.— We need only cast one glance at our Blessed Savior, Who ought always to be our Model, in order to see that **His whole life was a continual** exercise of **mercy.** He comforted the afflicted, healed the sick, forgave sins, did good to His enemies, nay, wished so ardently to inspire us with mercy, that, in speaking of the sentence which He will pronounce at the last day, He makes mention only of the works of mercy which the elect shall have performed and reproaches the lost with nothing but their hardness of heart.

Sixth Sunday After Pentecost.

"I have compassion on the multitude"
(St. Matt. xv. 32).

On Compassion for the Wretched.

Point I.— Compassion for the wretched is one of the surest signs that we shall be saved, because of all virtues it is the one which **draws down most grace from Heaven.** Scripture is full of sayings and examples which prove this truth. This is because God, Who is Goodness by essence, takes pleasure in showering favors on those of His Children in whom He sees a greater abundance of this lovely perfection. Let us thank Him if He has given us a compassionate heart; and fear, on the other hand, if we be pitiless towards the wretched.

Point II.— Because it is the virtue which **makes us like Jesus Christ.** It was compassion for the human race that led the Divine Word to become Incarnate. His life was simply one succession of acts of pity, and out of compassion for us did He lay down His life. We may therefore have good hope of our salvation if we are compassionate, but must see that our pity is supernatural, if we would be rewarded in the world to come.

Point III.— Because it is the virtue **concerning which the promises have been made.** Jesus Christ will say to His elect at the last day, *"I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink"* (St. Matt.

xxv. 35). Thrice blessed they who shall be addressed in those words. If we really wish it, they will be spoken to us. Let us be compassionate and be so in the eyes of God. Let us see in every afflicted person whom we meet, Christ's suffering children, and let us relieve them out of love to Him. If our sins give us cause to fear the judgments of God, our compassion for those in misery will help to arouse our confidence, since such compassion is one of the principal means of inducing God to be propitious to us.

Monday.

ON THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES.

POINT I.— Our Blessed Redeemer **is mindful of the necessities of the people** who follow Him; He is touched with compassion; wishes to provide for them and performs a miracle in order to prevent them from suffering hunger. Is He not a Master worthy of being followed?

POINT II.— **Every day Jesus renews** this far-famed miracle of **the multiplication of the loaves.** He feeds all mankind; causes the fruits of the earth to grow; makes them ripen for all; provides for everything: *usque ad delicias.* Few persons think of the wonderful care of our good Father; few return thanks to Him; many use these gifts against Himself to offend Him. Let us avoid such sins.

POINT III.— The multitude followed Our Lord into the desert, without thinking of taking with them what was needful, persuaded that **in following their Divine Master they should want for nothing.** Let us follow him with like, and even greater, trust, for we have the experience of the past, which these people had not. *"When I sent you without purse and scrip or shoes, did you want anything?"* Jesus said to His disciples (St. Luke xxii. 35). Each one of us can say that ever since he began to serve this admirable Master, so far from being in want of anything, he has been better provided than he would have been in the service of the world and the devil.

Tuesday.

On Providence.

Point I.— **God is the Lord** and Master **of all creation.** He produced, preserves and governs all things with a wondrous providence: *"The same is Lord over all,"* says St. Paul (Rom. x. 12). He is present in everything, knows everything, has full power over everything; nothing takes place in the universe without His will or permission; everything is ruled by His infinite wisdom. Let us accustom ourselves to see in this Providence of God all events of highest import, all the fluctuating vicissitudes of families, cities, states, the Church and the world, and we shall be distressed at nothing that may happen.

Point II.— God Almighty **has special Providence over the virtuous**, whom He looks upon as His Children, His friends and His true worshipers: *"Rich unto all that call upon Him"* (Rom. x. 12). He keeps particular watch over them, loves them more tenderly, protects them more carefully, leads them by safer paths to a supernatural end. Let us strive to merit suchlike fatherly care.

Point III.— This Providence is a wondrous source of calm and confidence of soul; but God desires also that this confidence and peace of mind should not be idle. **He wishes us to act with prudence** and care, and for this reason He has gifted us with light and strength. Hence on our side should we be energetic in matters that concern us, and yet should trust in God as if all depended upon Him alone.

Wednesday.

On Providence.

Point I.— The Providence of God governs all things **wisely.** His knowledge is infinite, His uprightness unchangeable, the end He proposes to Himself most sublime, the means He employs infallible. We ought to submit to it, though God's motives in acting be undiscoverable to us, or His commands may perplex us and be contrary to our self-love.

Point II.— It governs **efficaciously.** Whatever is God's absolute will must be done; it is vain to resist or murmur. What depends on our liberty will be done also, if God wills; He can take measures to bring it about, and even when we resist Him He gains His purpose, which is to punish our disobedience, if we will not have Him reward our dutifulness.

POINT III.— It governs **sweetly**, accommodating itself through mercy to our powers, inclinations and desires, strengthening us by God's grace, encouraging us by blandishments and promises. Let us then love His fatherly Providence.

Thursday.

WE SHOULD ABANDON OURSELVES TO THE GUIDANCE OF PROVIDENCE.

POINT I.— Abandonment to God's Providence is most **reasonable**; God knows what is necessary and best for us: He is all powerful and loves us tenderly. This love will lead Him to bestow on us whatever He knows to be necessary and that He can safely give.

POINT II.— Such abandonment is most **pleasing to God.** It redounds to His glory that we should follow His guidance and trust to His unfailing love.

POINT III.— Abandonment of this kind is most **advantageous to us.** We can live in quiet, since God takes care of us; merit, consolation, holiness, are the fruits of our trustfulness.

Friday.

ON THREE WAYS OF DRAWING DOWN GOD'S GRACES.

POINT I.— The first means is **a strong desire.** The people would not have beheld the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, and found in it their support, had they not followed Jesus Christ with earnestness and perseverance: *"I have compassion on the multitude because they continue with Me now three days"* (ST. MATT. xv. 32). If we have so little grace, and are so inclined to evil and so weak in doing right, let us confess that we do not earnestly desire God's help and that our prayers are, perhaps, nothing more than the movement of our lips.

POINT II.— The second means is **retirement.** It was in the desert that God multiplied the loaves and satisfied the hunger of the people. So, too, it is in time of recollection that God communicates Himself to the soul. He does not visit where there is noise. Let us therefore make for ourselves an interior solitude in the very midst of our chief occupations. If our business bring on dissipation of mind, we shall not even perceive the few graces which God may bestow upon us at some future time.

POINT III.— The third means is **humility.** Jesus Christ made the multitude sit down on the ground before distributing the loaves: *"He commanded the multitude to sit down upon the ground."* We must therefore retire into the depths of our abjectness and sit down, humbled to the dust, in the midst of our wretchedness, if we wish God to take pity on us: *"The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds"* (ECCLUS. xxxv. 21). Is it not a secret undercurrent of pride that makes us so poor?

Saturday.

ON SPIRITUAL CONSOLATIONS.

"They did all eat and had their fill"
(ST. MATT. xv. 37).

POINT I.— **We must wait for them patiently.** The people waited three days for the food which was necessary for them, and we aspire to taste spiritual consolations so soon as we give ourselves to God, although we can do without them. Let us rather acknowledge ourselves unworthy of them, even though we should never have committed a mortal sin: *"It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs"* (ST. MATT. xv. 26).

POINT II.— **We must enjoy them humbly.** If God, through goodness which we deserve not, give us spiritual consolations, the gift of tears, the sweetness of His love, let us relish such favors, while humbling ourselves: God is perhaps only making His yoke so easy to us because we are as yet only children in virtue. Let us fear, above all, lest these consolations should be mere illusions. They are so assuredly, if they make us less humble, less mortified and less fervent.

POINT III.— **We must endure the want of them without discouragement.** They are the food of the weak. When God, after having bestowed them, takes them from us, it is a reason for confidence rather than a subject for discouragement. He shows us thereby that we are now fit for the food of the strong, which consists in holy courage in the midst of the greatest dryness. When God deprives us of His consolations in order to punish our negligence, we should still not be discouraged, but in either of these cases we should increase in watchfulness, self-denial, humility and punctuality in our spiritual exercises. Fervor does not consist in consolations, but in the determination of the will to serve the Almighty in whatever mood He may be pleased to leave us.

Seventh Sunday After Pentecost.

ON FALSE TEACHERS.

"*Beware of false prophets*" (ST. MATT. vii. 15).

POINT I.— Our salvation depends generally on our fulfillment of this precept of Jesus Christ; and it is difficult always to observe it, because evil teachers assume the outward seeming of good ones: "*Who come to you in the clothing of sheep.*" Nevertheless, there are three tests whereby we may discern false teachers. The first is the **uprightness of** our own **heart.** When we choose a director with a good intention and after having invoked the Spirit of God, this Holy Spirit will not allow us to make a mistake, or else He will soon correct our error. What was our object in choosing our particular director?

POINT II.— The second test is **doctrine.** If a director depart from the teaching of the Church, or if he pursue a method different in sentiment and practice from that of other directors who are held in high repute by the generality of good people, he is a false prophet, or a dangerous director. However holy his life may seem to be, he is a wolf in sheep's clothing. The foundation of real holiness is submission to the Catholic Church and true humility.

POINT III.— The third criterion is **their works.** This is the test Jesus Christ gives, and it is that which is most within the reach of the simple: *"By their fruits you shall know them."* It is true that a bad director may pretend to perform even remarkable deeds of holiness. Nevertheless, in considering the whole of his conduct we shall always perceive that some parts of it are very defective; it will, taken all in all, make an unfavorable impression on upright hearts, which will prevent them from trusting themselves to him, at least out of precaution, even if charity, as usually happens, does not allow them to form a decided judgment concerning him. Let us beg of God to send us a good director and heartily thank Him if we have already found one.

Monday.

ON FALSE FRIENDS.

POINT I.— False friends are such as are **corrupt in faith or in morals.** People soon become like them, the Holy Spirit tells us: *"A friend of fools shall become like to them"* (PROV. xiii. 20). Friendship, which supposes similarity of affections and ideas, cannot be real with any one leading a disorderly life, unless we are disorderly ourselves.

POINT II.— False friends are they who are **flatterers.** If they do not believe what they tell us about ourselves, they are insincere; if they do believe it, they are dangerous. A true friend warns his friend of his faults, leads him to what is good, and if he sometimes show satisfaction at his virtues, he does so without flattery and brings him back always to humility. Do our friends act thus towards us? Do we act thus towards them?

POINT III.— False friends are friends out of **purely natural inclination.** Friendship is often founded on this. If it be not sanctified, and virtue be not its real basis, if instead of serving for mutual edification it is restricted to simple show of attachment, to interchange of worldly thoughts, of temporal services, it is not real, because it is not according to God. Such friendships, moreover, are not lasting, while holy friendships last as long as life and are transformed by death into eternal friendships. Let us then sanctify all our attachments.

Tuesday.

"Who come to you in the clothing of sheep" (St. Matt. vii. 15).

Point I.— **Our state of life**, especially if we are Religious, **is one of holiness**; our name, our habit, our dwelling, our profession, all point towards holiness: but of what use will our state and all other external circumstances be, if we are not inwardly holy? It is nothing to dwell in Jerusalem, it is everything to live there holily.

Point II.— We often show others the path of holiness; we lead them into it by our solicitude, our conversation, our preaching and our direction. What will all this avail, **if we practice not what we prescribe** to others? What blindness! To save others from shipwreck, as those did who helped Noah to build the ark, and not to preserve ourselves from it! To lead others to Heaven and not enter it ourselves!

Point III.— We possess the approval, the esteem, and the praise of men: of what use will this be to us, **unless we have the approval** and esteem of **God?** This alone is what we must seek after; all the rest is simple vanity and deceit.

Wednesday.

"Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit" (St. Matt. vii. 17).

Point I.—"*A good tree bringeth forth good fruit.*" Each of us is a tree planted by the hand of God in a favored soil, cultivated carefully and watered abundantly. **If we do anything good, the glory is due to God.** When He rewards our merits, He rewards His own gifts; let us thank Him with humility and gratitude.

Point II.—"*An evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*" When we examine our thoughts, words and deeds, and find that they are one long succession of faults, **have we not reason to fear that we are evil trees?** Let us ask God to change us by His grace, as He is able to do, "*into the good olive-tree*" (Rom. xi. 24). Let us ask Him to give us the will to strive to produce this change in our hearts.

Point III.— Let us consider three great drawbacks in an evil tree. First, **it bears evil fruit:** it is a great evil when God lets us commit sins. Secondly, **it will have to be cut down:** an unhappy death will perhaps carry us off when we least expect it. Thirdly, **it will be cast into the fire:** of all misfortunes, the greatest is to be rejected by God, and to be cast into the fire which will never be extinguished. Let us fear these evils and be on our guard against them.

Thursday.

On the Necessity of Good Works.

"*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down*" (St. Matt. vii. 19).

Point I.— Good works are necessary in order **to fulfill the command to love God.** Love is not an idle passion, says St. Augustine, but turns the heart towards the object of its love and causes the heart to act for the sake of the person loved: "*Show me love doing nothing in the soul: you will not find such.*" Have we not reason to fear that, as we do so little for God, His love is not in our heart and that the feeling of it which we occasionally have, is superficial only?

Point II.— Good works are necessary in order **to fulfill the command to love our neighbor,** not only because we cannot fulfill it without works of mercy, but also because it is an essential duty of charity to set a good example, and this is not done when we are barren of good works.

Point III.— Good works are necessary, also, in order **to fulfill the command to love ourselves.** Can we say we love ourselves, if we are laboring only for this world, where we are to remain for so short a time, and where the riches we amass are of so small value; but heaping up nothing for the next world where we shall be for ever, and where our riches will have an infinite value? Let us then take measures to become rich for eternity, *divites æternitatis.*

Friday.

On the Properties of Good Works.

Point I.— They must be performed **in a state of grace.** Let the terrible words of the Apostle sink deep into our hearts: *"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing"* (1 Cor. xiii. 1–3). How does this apply to us? The distressing uncertainty as to whether we are in a state of grace may well deprive us of all complacency in our good works.

Point II.— They must be **without defect.** What is truly good must be good in every respect; and a good work, even if deficient in one particular only, by reason of time, place, manner, or other circumstances not befitting, loses its value altogether, or has its merit lessened. God loves order and will have it in everything. Have we not reason to fear that most of our good works are defective and that we may be miserably poor, however large the number we have performed?

POINT III.— They must be done **for a supernatural end**, for the glory of God, for His holy love, in imitation of Jesus Christ, Whom God hath given to us all as a pattern. It is, above all things, the end which gives their value to works, or which takes away their merit. Are not self-love, caprice, custom, or even some motive in itself good, but a merely natural one, the inciting cause of most actions? We are spinning only spiders' webs: *"They have woven the webs of spiders . . . their works are unprofitable works"* (Is. lix. 5–6).

Saturday.

"Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (ST. MATT. vii. 21).

POINT I.— The service which God requires from His true servants does not consist in fervent words, frequent prayers, or extraordinary devotions; but consists in **exact fidelity in do-**

ing what God requires from us, whether He command or recommend something, or place us in a position to act or to suffer for Him. The fulfillment of His holy will is the unerring voucher of our dutifulness and of our love to Him.

Point II.— God is not satisfied even if we do His will on certain days and on certain occasions. **He wishes it to be done invariably and until death:** .*"Be thou faithful until death"* (Apoc. ii. 10). Though he should decree that we are to be involved in labor, affliction and misery to the last moment of life, we should persevere in obeying Him with complete submission. Without such perseverance He will not accept our so-called fidelity and love.

Point III.— To sweeten this faithfulness till death — a thing which to us seems irksome — let us consider that death may perhaps not be so distant as we think and that, even were it very remote indeed, **the greatness of the reward well deserves faithful allegiance** in the service of God. Our recompense is to be a kingdom, and a kingdom in heaven; it is the full measure of everything that we can wish for — life, riches, glory, pleasure, immortality. Should not this sweeten the labors of the few days we have to live on earth, while diligently performing what God requires from us?

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

"There was a certain rich man who had a steward" (St. Luke xvi. 1).

Point I.— This rich man is God. He possesses in Himself an infinity of perfections, which are His true riches; He is the absolute and independent Master of everything; He is able to create numberless worlds richer and more beautiful than the one we live in; all the gifts of nature, all the treasures of grace and all the priceless wealth of glory are at His disposal. Let us, by a disinterested and pure love, rejoice with God because He is so rich, so powerful, so happy; and even from very love to ourselves, let us rejoice that we are in the service of so incomparable a Master.

Point II.— This rich man had a steward. God has entrusted His gifts to us that we may turn them to account. Everything good which we possess in mind or body, the blessings of life and fortune, graces and supernatural helps are benefits bestowed on us by this good Master. Are we grateful for them? Let us tremble at the thought of the account we shall have to give of our stewardship.

Point III.— If we abuse the gifts of God, if we waste them as did the unjust steward, if we neglect to cultivate them, God will withdraw them and will neither grant us more time nor further means for work; He will punish our unfaithfulness and negligence. Let us be afraid of such dread punishment: *"My Lord taketh away from me the stewardship."*

Monday.

On the Use of Worldly Riches.

Point I.— **We must use them as stewards only.** We may heap up riches as much as we will, and even by the most just means; we shall never be masters of anything. Poverty is of the essence of our state, inasmuch as God's dominion embraces everything and is inalienable. The rich are only stewards on a larger scale — nay, they are mere slaves whom the Master dismisses at will and who have no absolute right even to the bread which satisfies their hunger and to the water that quenches their thirst. What folly to attach ourselves to riches that do not belong to us, that any mischance may deprive us of and that death, however long it may be in coming, will snatch from us eventually!

Point II.— Again, **we must regard riches as a burden.** They are such, since, after having provided for our needs, we have not any right to what remains over and above: for all belongs to our Master, and we have to give Him an exact account of all. Instead of complaining, let us then thank our good Master when He sees fit to take from us the stewardship of His goods. Let us at least be resigned and say with Job:

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away" (Job i. 21).

Point III.—**We must use them according to God's intentions** for our support and that of the poor, and the whole in the manner which God our Master has prescribed. To follow our whims in the disposal of His goods would show us to be spendthrifts and would place us in the situation in which God would say to us: *"How is it that I hear this of thee?"* Does not our conscience already address us thus?

Tuesday.

"Give an account of thy stewardship."

Point I.—We shall be examined **as to the evil which we have done.** We must not hold ourselves so strongly assured of the forgiveness of our past sins as not to be in continual fear: *"Be not without fear about sin forgiven"* (Ecclus. v. 5). And then, too, God will make strict inquiry into the sins we daily commit. He will unveil each one of them, will condemn and punish each, unless we punish them ourselves. If their enormity alarm us not, their number should.

Point II.—We shall be examined **as to the good which we ought to have done** and which we have not done. How often have we failed in our obligations! How many acts of virtue, how many good works have been omitted! How many graces have been neglected! How many opportunities of sanctifying ourselves have been entirely lost! We shall be constrained to confess that for every good deed we have done, we have left a thousand undone.

POINT III.— We shall be examined **as to the good which we have done.** We shall have to give an account of our good works, because we did them badly: *"I will judge justice."* We have prayed, fasted, frequented the Sacraments, and, if Religious, have kept our vows and our rules; but with how much negligence, lukewarmness, cowardice, indevotion and self-love, have we done all this! In order to be justified before God, it is not enough to do good, we must do it well, says the Wise Man. *"They that have kept just things justly, shall be justified"* (WISD. vi. 11).

Wednesday.

ON THE JUDGMENT WHICH GOD IS ALREADY PASSING UPON US.

"How is it that I hear this of thee?"
(ST. LUKE xvi. 2).

POINT I.— **God already knows all** our actions. *"In Him we live and move and are"* (ACTS xvii. 28). Everything is open to His eyes, and by a single act of His infinite knowledge He takes into account, even in the smallest detail, the past, the present and the future:

"He seeth from eternity to eternity" (Ecclus. xxxix. 25). Let us bow down before the limitless extent of God's knowledge and render honor to it.

Point II.—**God is already judging all** our actions. This means that, according to our manner of understanding the ways of God, a secret and hidden judgment has already been passed in heaven as to each one of us, that our deeds are already pleading there either for us or against us and that even now God, in some sense, approves or condemns our conduct. Who will not tremble at this thought? Who will not endeavor, if he be in a state of mortal sin, to obtain, by penance, the reversal of an unfavorable sentence?

Point III.—**God is already rewarding or punishing all** our actions. God will only execute after our death the kind of sentence, of eternal life or eternal death which He is already passing on each one of us, so that we can still cause it to be changed. Nevertheless, it begins already to take effect by signs and indications most consoling to the good, namely, the graces which God gives them; and very awful to the wicked, to wit, the chastisements with which He visits them. Indeed the misfortunes of this world are true rewards for the just, and its riches are real judgments upon sinners.

Thursday.

ON THE REGRET WHICH THE ABUSE OF GRACES WILL CAUSE US AT DEATH.

"For now thou canst be steward no longer"
(ST. LUKE xvi. 2).

POINT I.— Let us think **with what regret we shall say** to ourselves these words **on our death-bed:** *"Give an account of thy stewardship: for now thou canst be steward no longer."* The abuse of graces in our lifetime and the account of them we shall have to give, affect us but little, because we only see this abuse piecemeal, as it were, and little by little, something after the manner of one who loses his all by slow degrees. But at death such abuse will stand before us, as a whole, in all its extent, and will crush us with intolerable weight. We shall see at a glance the greatness of our loss, the enormity of our ingratitude and the judgment we may be on the point of confronting.

POINT II.— Regret for the abuse of grace will be more bitter at death in proportion **as the grace we have received has been more abundant** and more frequent. Thinking of this, what regret should we not look forward to — we whose life has been one long unbroken succession of grace, we who have received so many special graces? The grace of our vocation to the faith, possibly to religious life and those graces to which these have given us a title, should suffice to make us tremble, if we correspond not to them. Do we correspond to them?

Point III.— What will fill up the measure of our regret will be, that **it will not restore** to us the **graces we have lost.** They were connected with certain moments in our life, and these moments will have passed away, never to return. Our regret, if it be prompted by God, may obtain for us forgiveness and preserve us from hell; but it is very difficult for it to be deep enough and efficacious enough to preserve us altogether from purgatory. If we continue to lead our imperfect life, we must expect to die with the terrible thought that we shall take only one step from our bed into grievous pain.

Friday.

"*The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light*" (St. Luke xvi. 8).

Point I.— Let us consider **what worldly people do** in order **to succeed** in their plans and to further their own interest. They think of this alone, they speak of nothing else; they study the surest means, and use them eagerly, without becoming discouraged by difficulties or losing heart: and all this for a phantom good, for a breath of honor, for the pleasure of a moment. Yet we, who are enlightened by the light of faith and of grace, live in complete negligence, without anxiety and without earnestness, as if we had nothing to hope or to fear.

Point II.— The prudence of worldly people is entirely engaged **in making up for past losses,** in profiting by the present and in foreseeing the evil which they may have to fear or the good which they may possibly hope for, in order to avoid evil and achieve good. Yet we, insensible to our real interests, are only slightly touched by remembrance of the past; of the gifts of God that we may thank Him for them, of our sins that we may expiate them. We are affected neither by consideration of the present, which should urge us to diligence in the only true business of our life, that of salvation; nor by foresight of the future, which should make us prepare for death and win paradise.

Point III.— **We should be humbled** at thought of **our own conduct.** How much we do for our temporal advantage, in order to preserve or to recover health, to succeed in some undertaking, or to obtain what our vanity or self-love proffers. Had we but a like zeal for holiness and for heavenly things!

Saturday.

On Christian Prudence.

Point I.— Christian prudence causes us **to use all the means of salvation.** This is what the children of the world do in the trivial matters they dignify with the name of business, in lawsuits, in trade and in pursuit of their undertakings. We shall succeed in the matter of salvation if we work at it with the like prudence; but let us reflect how very far we are from doing this: *"The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light"* (St. Luke xvi. 8).

Point II.— In the impossibility of employing all the means of salvation, Christian prudence makes us **adopt** those which are **the most sure.** In matters of small consequence, it would always be a mistake to neglect this rule; but a breach of it is inconceivable in the business of salvation. Whenever there is a question of eternal happiness or eternal misery, not to act in the safest way is to have lost faith and reason. Are we ourselves living like reasonable beings?

Point III.— Christian prudence **prevents us from slackening our earnestness** in the use of the means of salvation. Salvation is promised to perseverance. Let us recall to mind the time when we gave ourselves to God and ponder as to what extent we have grown remiss. Let us repent and labor to become again what we then were, and ask for grace to do this. *"Renew our days as from the beginning"* (Lament. v. 21).

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

"Seeing the city, He wept over it" (St. Luke xix. 41).

Point I.— Our Blessed Savior weeps over Jerusalem on the same day that He enters it in triumph amidst the acclamations of the people. He shed tears of compassion over this unhappy city, which He had ever loved so dearly. Let us think of the goodness of the Divine Redeemer; He is more touched by the misfortunes of those whom He loves than by His own. The honor paid to Him does not make Him forget the affliction of His people. Who will refuse to love so good a God?

Point II.— Jesus weeps over the misfortunes of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and they themselves take no thought about them. They were on the eve of total and utter ruin, were making merry and amusing themselves and were exclusively intent on the business of the hour, without thinking of appeasing the wrath of God. Is not this the condition of most Christians, who think only of present amusements and of the world, on the eve of their eternity, to which they never give serious thought? Are we not doing this very thing?

Point III.— Our Blessed Lord weeps over the misfortunes of Jerusalem, yet does not deliver it from them, as He might have done; in order to teach us, first, that we ourselves must work with Him to avert evil and to do good; secondly, that if He is good, He is also just and severe, and that if we abuse His goodness, He will make us feel the effects of His justice; that even when punishing us, He does it sorrowfully and contrary to His inclination: *"Ah! I will be revenged of My enemies"* (Isaias i. 24). Alas! He said, must I avenge Myself on those who persist in being My enemies? Let us profit by these lessons.

Monday.

On the Gift of Tears.

"Seeing the city, He wept over it" (St. Luke xix. 41).

Point I.— Three kinds of tears may come from God. First, **tears of compunction.** These are the first we ought to shed, and are consequently the earliest which God grants us. If we weep not foremost of all over our own pitiable state and our own sins, our tears should be held in suspicion, for they simply may be the result of natural sensibility. Let us then begin by weeping over ourselves, striving to enter into the enormity of our sins, the uncertainty as to whether they have been remitted, and the everlasting torments which may possibly be reserved for us.

Point II.— **Tears of pity.** These tears come from God if we shed them on account of the temporal ills of our fellow-creatures, through brotherly love. These tears, furthermore, proceed from God, when we weep over their spiritual ills. Both these considerations caused Jesus Christ to shed tears over Jerusalem: *"He wept over it."* We, too, should also be ready to weep over our suffering brethren, were we really to look on them as the children of God and our brothers in Jesus Christ, and when we see them hurrying to perdition, were we to consider the greatness of the evil they are preparing for themselves.

POINT III.—**Tears of joy.** These tears, which sometimes accompany penitence, or which are shed by those who are touched by tender love for God, come from Him when they make us more humble, more distrustful of self, more penitent and fervent; otherwise they are not to be relied upon. In case of doubt, let us prefer desolation and aridity to such tears as those last named, provided, without being discouraged, we have always a firm will to serve God.

Tuesday.

ON FALSE PEACE.

"If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace" (ST. LUKE xix. 42).

POINT I.—Peace is often feigned **before a war breaks out.** When we are threatened with war without being aware of it, we prepare not for it. This was the position of the Jews at the time of Jesus Christ, and it is also that of the just whom the devil is ever watching and who are overlooking passions in their bud, venial sins, want of precaution in regard to little things. Jesus Christ, Who saw the siege and destruction of Jerusalem forty years before they took place, sees also a day fixed, often very near, when the careless and unwary will have to sustain combats in which they will be vanquished. Are we not of this number?

POINT II.— Peace is false above all, **when we think we are** still **enjoying it, though** we are already **in the midst of war.** Jerusalem was at war with God, through its crimes and its abuse of His graces, yet believed it was still under His protection, because His worship was performed in the temple with exactitude. Let us not trust in the outward fulfillment of our duties: unless we have charity, we are at war with God, and our false peace is in some sense more dangerous than open war.

POINT III.— **Peace is often false after war;** this is when we wrongly think that the war is ended. In order to be at peace with God, it is not enough to cease to offend Him; we must also make up for the past by hatred for our sins and by true penitence; on no other conditions does God make peace. False peace is frequent, because there are many false penitents. We think ourselves penitent because we have quitted our sins, but often have only abandoned them from reasons which have no connection with real repentance.

Wednesday.

ON THE MISFORTUNES AND THE RUIN OF JERUSALEM.

POINT I.—Jesus Christ, melting into tears, foretells the **evils which were about to cause the** utter **ruin of** guilty **Jerusalem,** and which in fact did soon destroy it. After the siege, the capture, and sacking of the town, those of the inhabitants who died not from famine perished by the sword, or were made slaves. The whole nation was dispersed throughout the world, without temple, religion, liberty, an object of contempt and hate to all other nations, a terrible example of God's justice and without hope of ever being restored to favor. Such is the punishment which the people more beloved of God than any other, drew down upon itself by its ingratitude and its crimes. Let us act in such wise as that its ruin may serve to stave off ours.

POINT II.—**The causes of the ruin of Jerusalem** were:—First, contempt of religion, profanation of the temple and of things holy; secondly, divisions among the people—there was nothing but dissensions and factions among them, when the city was besieged; thirdly, obstinacy in rejecting the Messias Who had come to save them. They would profit neither by His light nor by His graces, and God gave them over to other nations. They were afraid of losing their temporal kingdom; they despised the everlasting kingdom Our Lord had come to offer them, and they lost both the one and the other.

If we neglect the practices of religion, are divided among ourselves and profit not by the graces of God, let us fear lest great evil be on the point of falling on us, our community and the whole body of which we are members.

Thursday.

WE SHOULD PROFIT BY GOD'S GRACES.

"*If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day*" (ST. LUKE xix. 42).

POINT I.— **God gives us His graces with wondrous goodness.** Jesus Christ shed His Blood in order to merit them for us; they are the price of His most precious Blood. God Almighty is ever urging us to receive them, He waits for us patiently till we have accepted them, studies favorable opportunities for converting us, handles us skillfully, presses and entreats us. He does all this as though it were to His own interest, and not ours, that we should be saints and that we should go to heaven. Dost thou not "*despise the riches of His goodness*" (ROM. ii. 4)? Not to profit by His graces is surely nothing short of despising His fatherly love.

POINT II.— "*If thou also hadst known.*" **God** has designs **very advantageous to us,** in giving us His graces: He wishes to enlighten us by His Divine inspirations, to rouse us to act aright, to comfort us in our toil and enable us to merit the untold riches of paradise. We frustrate all His designs if we allow His graces to be lost, as these are the means for obtaining all His blessings.

POINT III.—*"And that in this thy day."* If we do not avail ourselves of graces when God bestows them upon us, **these times of blessing will pass away,** and perhaps we shall no longer have time to make good our losses. The time to come is in God's hand, and He is nowise bound to give it us: let us make use of the time present which is at our disposal. Do not let us postpone to a time which is not ours what must be done if we mean to live holily: *"Lest thou die before thy time"* (ECCLES. vii. 18), says the Holy Spirit.

Friday.

ON THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH GOD VISITS US.

"Because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation" (ST. LUKE xix. 44).

POINT I.— **He visits us inwardly** by the light with which He illumines our mind and by the good dispositions He excites in our heart. If we allow such illuminations and inspirations to pass away without paying them heed, we know not the visitation of God. The evil is, however, greater still when we resist them, shut the door in the face of God, or drive Him out so soon as He has entered. Let us reproach ourselves very severely in this regard: it is unlikely that there be not good reason so to do.

POINT II.— **God visits us outwardly** by the Holy Scriptures, the teaching of His Church and the good examples He puts before us. The Holy Scriptures are letters despatched from heaven to show us the way thither; the Church tells us by its teaching how we are to walk in that way, and by their example the good show us how to do this. What can we desire more in order to keep to the narrow path?

POINT III.— **God visits us inwardly and outwardly** by the blessings and evils which He sends to us. The good things show us His loving-kindness, and the evil things His justice; but the object of both is to bring us back to Him, or to strengthen us in His service. We ought, therefore, to receive everything that happens to us here as so many visits from God and use all as a means of uniting ourselves to Him.

Saturday.

ON PRAYER.

"My house is the house of prayer"
(ST. LUKE xix. 46).

POINT I.— We ought **to pray**, pray **frequently**, pray **always**, as our dear Lord tells us to do. We have always need of prayer in order to obtain graces, advance in the path of holiness, overcome temptations, find alleviation in our sufferings, as well as to persevere in good. God wishes to give us the necessary help, but He also wishes us to ask Him for it.

POINT II.— We ought not only to pray, but to **pray well**; without this our prayers deserve not the name. They insult the Majesty of God, and are profitless to us. Our prayers should be accompanied by attention of soul, fervor of will, reverence of demeanor. Let us examine as to what we are wanting in when we pray.

POINT III.— To pray well, **we must put away every hindrance**, the trouble and bustle of business which distract the mind, attachment to creatures which engross the will, violence of the passions which disturb us, the sins and remorse of conscience which deprive us of confidence, love and union with God. Let us drive away all these hindrances and bring to our prayers the proper dispositions in so far as we are able, and we shall draw down on us the spirit of prayer and meditation, which is an excellent and necessary means of acquiring holiness and of persevering in it to the end.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON UNCERTAINTY AS TO WHETHER WE ARE IN A STATE OF GRACE.

"*To some who trusted in themselves as just and despised others, He spoke also this parable*" (ST. LUKE xviii. 9).

POINT I.—"*Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred*" (ECCLES. ix. 1) and this uncertainty lasts all through life. We are sure that we have been involved in the guilt of original sin, that we ourselves have sinned and that God hates sin; we are certain that repentance washes away sins; but no one knows, nor can know, if our contrition has been efficacious. This is a dreadful uncertainty. "*Thou thinkest thyself a sheep, and God perhaps knoweth thee to be a goat.*" We must fear for the time being and still more for the future.

POINT II.—It is a grievous thing to live and die in such uncertainty; but such a condition is necessary in order to remove pride and negligence, to keep us in fear and humility and lead us to avoid evil and do good. Great saints became what they were through this uncertainty. Let us bless God's providence, which has chosen this as one means of our salvation.

POINT III.—In order to be as nearly certain as may be, we should, first, fear and humble ourselves; secondly, avoid sin and everything which may lead to it; thirdly, do good works; fourthly, have confidence in the goodness and mercy of God; fifthly, comfort ourselves by the advice of the beloved disciple that if our conscience reproach us not with any sin which we have not tried to expiate, we may live on in humble trust that God has forgiven us.

Monday.

"I am not as the rest of men" (St. Luke xviii. 11).

Point I.—At times we imitate the pride of the Pharisee, **when we treat others contemptuously** either by our words, our behavior, our manner, or in our thoughts. Such contempt is very unjust: we have nothing of our own save sin; everything else, talents, learning, position, our many qualities of body and mind, all are God's; why should we glory in them? Others possess great gifts deserving our esteem. Let us consider them from this point of view, reflecting deeply on our own misery, and we shall despise no one.

Point II.—Two secrets show us how **ill-founded is our contempt**: first, the secret of the heart of him whom I despise. This may be the temple of the Holy Ghost, Who is enriching it with His graces, while I am despising it! Secondly, the secret of my own heart: I prefer myself to others, and often my heart is empty of God, Who perhaps looks on me with aversion and on others with complacency: *"Where then is thy boasting?"* (ROM. iii. 27).

POINT III.—The contempt we have for others has **very dangerous consequences.** God takes pleasure in humbling such scornful men; He allows them to fall into shameful sins that cause them to be despised; others have a rooted aversion for them, since nothing is so hard to bear as contempt; furthermore they are hateful to God: *Deo odibiles.* To be hated by God and man is the lot of a proud spirit which indulges in contempt of others.

Tuesday.

ON THE CAUSE OF THE PHARISEE'S PRESUMPTION.

"The Pharisee standing prayed thus within himself" (ST. LUKE xviii. 11).

POINT I.—**He did not see his own interior.** He had perhaps committed in his heart all the sins he thanked God he had not been guilty of. Possibly human motives alone had caused him to avoid open crime, and he was nothing but a whited sepulchre, full of rottenness. Let us abide in fear, lest God, in spite of our outward regularity, should find in us some sinful propensities. We have so evil a nature, and it is so easy to consent inwardly to sin.

POINT II.—**If he had once been just, perhaps he was so no longer.** For this it would suffice to have committed some secret mortal sin which still remained in his heart. Could he be certain that it was not so? Had he made this reflection, it would have prevented him from flattering himself about his righteousness. Let us make this reflection in order to keep ourselves humble and fearful, whenever the devil inspires us with a feeling of self-satisfaction.

Point III.— **He did not consider himself obliged to advance in perfection.** From his very prayer, it is evident that he was satisfied with his state and that he was continuing in it. He said to God, as it were: "I am holy enough;" and this sufficed to cause his ruin, according to the words of St. Augustine: *Si dixeris: Sufficiti, periisti.* Desiring nothing more, he asked for nothing more; yet prayer is necessary for salvation. We shall never be so perfect that the wish to become more holy, and that prayer which is the expression of the desire, will not be to us of rigorous obligation.

Wednesday.

On the Corruption of our Good Works through Pride.

"*I fast twice in a week*" (St. Luke xviii. 12).

Point I.— Pride corrupts our good works **before we do them,** when it is the motive for which they are done. In such case they are generally not only without merit, but positively bad and highly offensive in God's sight.

POINT II.— Pride taints our good works **while we are doing them,** when, without being the motive for which they are done, it yet contrives to mix itself up with them. The spiritual fruit is then greatly lessened and perhaps is insufficient to make up for the harm which pride has inflicted. Let us examine whether there be not much complacency and pride in the small amount of good done by us.

POINT III.— Pride spoils our good works **after they are performed**; not by corrupting them — which is no longer possible — but by depriving them, in a greater or less degree, of their merit. Feelings of satisfaction from good works done by us are an injustice to God, through Whose grace alone they have been accomplished, and often they have no foundation for our satisfaction. Let us not add presumption to self-love: this is sinful enough of itself; but let us rest content with saying, and always with a feeling of fear: *" We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do." Servi inutiles sumus* (ST. LUKE xvii. 10).

Thursday.

A PENITENT SHOULD LOVE HUMILIATIONS.

"*The publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven*" (ST. LUKE xviii. 13).

POINT I.—**Because he deserves them.** A penitent is a contemptible being who has revolted against God and has preferred to Him unworthy, yea at times most debasing, satisfactions. He is not sure of his pardon, and may perhaps be evermore an object of scorn to all creatures and the sport even of devils. It is not only heaven, therefore, he should fear to look at, but all creatures, since he has made a bad use of all and deserves that all should conspire to destroy him. What reason then has he to complain, if God is pleased to use all creation to humble him? Should he not rather receive eagerly so slight a chastisement?

POINT II.—**Because humiliations** will **keep** him **in a spirit of penitence.** They will recall to the penitent's mind the state of most vile degradation to which he had lowered himself and will make him feel the hand of God punishing him in and by his sins, humbling him for having loved himself over much. If we feel not this love of humiliations, or at least unless we bear them patiently, it is greatly to be feared we are penitents only in outward show.

POINT III.—**Because humiliations are a means of repairing** the **scandal** we have caused.

The Church of yore enjoined them for the good of penitents; her spirit has not changed. No one can believe a person habitually proud to be really reconciled to God; his return to God is but a sham, and fresh lapses will prove it.

Friday.

ON THE FRUIT WE SHOULD DERIVE FROM THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR SINS.

"O God, be merciful to me a sinner"
(ST. LUKE xviii. 13).

POINT I.— The knowledge of our sins should, after the example of the publican, produce three feelings in us. **The first feeling is confusion**; he did not dare even to raise his eyes to heaven; he blushed for very shame. We have often offended our God, our Father, our Benefactor and our Friend; yet day by day we repeat our offenses, our ingratitude, our unfaithfulness; this too after so many proofs of goodness and tenderness on God's part and so many protestations on our own! Is not this a just cause for confusion?

POINT II.— **The second feeling is humility.** The publican stood apart at the lower end of the temple, believing himself unworthy to approach the altar. He proclaimed aloud that he was a sinner, deserving of contempt and punishment. There is nothing in the world more humiliating than sin, which is something lower than nothingness and which more than anything else alienates us from God; it renders us unworthy of honor and exposes us to the most shameful of all sufferings, namely, those of the damned. Who would dare to complain that he is neglected or humbled, were he to remember the sins he has committed?

POINT III.— **The third feeling is contrition.** The publican, touched with sincere sorrow, cries out to God for pardon and mercy and obtains both. In order to escape from this miserable state of sinfulness, and recover the grace, good will and tenderness of our God and Father, let us conceive true sorrow for having displeased Him; let us beg Him to have mercy upon us.

Saturday.

ON THE HOPE OF PARDON FOR OUR SINS.

"O God, be merciful to me a sinner"
(ST. LUKE xviii. 13).

POINT I.— This hope is founded **on the mercy of God.** Mercy is, of all God's perfections, the one He takes most pleasure in manifesting towards us: *"The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord"* (PSALM xxxii. 5). And, as if He feared lest such manifestations should not sufficiently confirm our hope, He promises to welcome us so soon as we turn to Him with our whole heart, to blot out our sins, and even remember them no more.

Point II.— This hope is founded **on the merits of Jesus Christ.** Our pardon has been purchased, has been paid for, and God has accepted the payment. Hence it is not only promised us, but is due, so soon as we are sorry for our sins. We are not able, it is true, to repent without grace; but Jesus has merited also for us the grace of repentance, and God is so good that sometimes He grants this grace without our asking for it. Let us then fly in spirit to the foot of the Cross, whensoever the devil may tempt us to mistrust.

Point III.— Such hope is in some sort founded **on our very sinfulness.** It is our sins that make us so wretched and consequently touch the Heart of God, our good Father. The greater these sins are, the more, in a manner, should we hope. *" O Lord, Thou wilt pardon my sin: for it is great,"* said David (Psalm xxiv. 11).

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE JOURNEYS OF JESUS CHRIST.

" Going out of the coasts of Tyre, He came by Sidon to the Sea of Galilee" (St. Mark vii. 31).

Point I.— Let us consider **the rule of these journeys.** It was simply and solely the will of His Father. *" I do always the things that please Him"* (St. John viii. 29). It might be thought that Jesus should have traveled over the world, instructing men in His sublime doctrine, reforming morals and giving, personally, His holy law to all nations; yet He confines Himself to one very small corner of the earth. This was because the Spirit of God sent Him there and nowhere else. Let us consult this Spirit as to all our journeys and undertakings and say to Him with the Prophet King: *"Direct my steps according to Thy Word"* (PSALM cxviii. 133).

POINT II.— Let us consider **their motive.** This was charity: *"Who went about doing good"* (ACTS x. 38). Jesus Christ, when He began the journey the gospel for to-day makes mention of, had in view the cure of the deaf and dumb man whom they brought to Him. Is charity the motive of all our coming in and going out? All journeys made from mere human motives will be wasted. In our own case do we not go hither and thither, for the most part to little or no purpose?

POINT III.— Let us consider **their manner.** We know that Jesus Christ never went to distant places otherwise than on foot, and He sometimes tired Himself so much as to be obliged to take rest: *"Being wearied with His journey"* (ST. JOHN iv. 6). Do we at least practice some mortification in our journeys? Are they not rather opportunities for satisfying our senses and causes of remissness?

Monday.

"They bring to Him one deaf and dumb" (St. Mark vii. 32).

Point I.—The infirmities this man looked upon as a great evil were **in the designs of God a great blessing,** inasmuch as they forced him to have recourse to God. For this reason the Holy Spirit tells us to rejoice when we suffer affliction: *"Count it all joy"* (St. James i. 2). Alas! how weak is our faith in this respect! Who amongst us considers himself fortunate when he is ill, or humbled, or ill-treated? The early Christians had this feeling: the Apostles *"went from the presence of the council rejoicing"* (Acts v. 41). Let us be ashamed of not having such sentiments, and of our faith being so imperfect.

Point II.—To excite lively faith and trust when under afflictions, we should remember that they confer honor upon us, since they **make us like unto Jesus Christ** and afford us opportunity of glorifying Him; that they are to us very useful, since they banish evil and procure true riches, grace, merit, holiness; that they fill God's friends with joy, since they are signs of predestination and proofs of God's love. Thoughts such as these will make us beg God not to spare us troubles.

Point III.—**Affliction produces in us all virtues,** particularly that of **patience:** it *"worketh patience"*; and God rewards patience with the greatest of all blessings, namely, perseverance and the crown of glory: *"Patience hath a perfect work"* (St. James i. 4). In order to obtain such an inestimable blessing, let us suffer with unbounded resignation.

Tuesday.

On three Degrees of Spiritual Deafness.

"They bring to Him one deaf and dumb"
(St. Mark vii. 32).

Point I.— Spiritual deafness, which Scripture likens to the corporal, has, even as this latter, different degrees. The first is, **a difficulty in hearing.** Inspirations, remorse, the word of God, spiritual reading, no longer produce any but the feeblest impressions. These once upon a time were sounds moving the soul and causing it to act, and now they are nothing but tinkling noises leaving us in our wonted torpid state. This is a truly dangerous condition.

Point II.— The second degree of spiritual deafness is **a very great difficulty in hearing.** In this case a person listens indeed to God's voice, but only now and again; the difficulty of hearing the voice irritates, and the little that has been heard is allowed to pass unheeded. This second degree is a very dangerous one, both because it gives reason to fear that complete deafness may follow and because the things which a person either does not care to hear, or allows to slip from the mind, are often needful for salvation.

Point III.— The third degree of spiritual deafness is **to hear none but very loud sounds** and in a confused manner. Such is the state of a soul hardened in mortal sin or in lukewarmness. The only cure for such a malady is some very powerful and extraordinary grace: "*He rises only at a loud cry,*" says St. Augustine. Let us examine carefully and see if we are not spiritually deaf and what degree of deafness has come upon us. Let us pray God to heal us, and use fitting means to obtain the cure. Spiritual deafness being voluntary, the remedy must surely lie in our own hands.

Wednesday.

On the Remedies for Spiritual Deafness.

Point I.— Jesus Christ **takes apart the deaf man** whom He wishes to heal: "*Taking him from the multitude apart*" (St. Mark vii. 33). We cannot be cured of our hardness in hearing God's voice, save by withdrawing from bustle. This difficulty may even be caused by the hubbub in which we live when alone. Let us then give ourselves up less to the world and keep our attention fixed on ourselves, in the midst of our outward occupations and greatest trials. We may even need to make a retreat of several days, should we have reached the further degrees just named of spiritual deafness. It is only in such complete retirement that we shall be able to hear God's voice and perceive the evil state of our conscience.

Point II.—Jesus Christ **spoke to the deaf man**, and commanded his ears to be opened: "*Ephpheta;*" "*Be thou opened.*" Hence must we, as soon as we are withdrawn from the noise of the world, beg Jesus Christ to speak to us once more, as we are prepared to listen to Him: "*Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.*" Then will He speak to us in our meditations, in our reading and in the preaching of His word, and will heal us. "*He sent His word and healed them*" (Ps. cvi. 20).

Point III.—Jesus Christ **put His fingers into the ears of the deaf man**, to open them. It is not enough for Jesus Christ to speak to us, and for us to hear Him; He must also open the ears of our heart by His grace. Thus did He open the heart of the woman of Philippi at the preaching of St. Paul: "*Whose heart the Lord opened to attend to those things which were said by Paul*" (Acts xvi. 14). Let us always in our spiritual reading and meditations ask for this grace. It is probable that because hitherto we have not done this we have reaped so little fruit from either.

Thursday.

ON SPIRITUAL DUMBNESS.

"They bring to him one deaf and dumb"
(ST. MARK vii. 32).

POINT I.— The spiritually dumb are they who **pray not, or pray badly.** Such praise not God, nor bless Him, nor thank Him, nor ask Him for what they need. What use shall we make of our tongue, if we employ it not for the glory of Him who gave it, and for our own salvation?

POINT II.— Again, the spiritually dumb remain silent **when** the glory of **God requires them to speak,** when religion is blasphemed, charity wounded and modesty outraged. Should prudence suggest to us, under circumstances so painful, to be silent, for fear of causing greater harm, let us at least speak within our hearts and give token to God of our sorrow. Let us say to Him: *"We must adore Thee, O Lord; to God alone be honor and glory, but to us confusion."*

POINT III.— Lastly, the spiritually dumb are they **whose speech is wholly worldly,** who when talking never edge in a word of edification. Our conversations are a kind of preaching: if they are saintly, we preach the word of God; if sinful, we preach the word of the devil; if of the earth, earthly, we preach the word of the world. Are we not spiritually dumb in at least one of these three ways?

Friday.

He that was cured spoke right (St. Mark vii. 35).

Point I.— The Holy Ghost tells us that a Christian who knows how to speak as he ought, bridling his tongue, is a perfect man; and this we know from experience, since **most of our sins are those of the tongue.** We should be saints if we avoided this evil, but true also is it that unless we avoid it, we deceive ourselves if we imagine we have any real virtue or true religion. Let us reflect on these words which an Apostle seems to have written expressly for our benefit: *"If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain"* (St. James i. 26).

Point II.— To speak right, we must avoid: first, all words that **show vanity,** impatience or levity, **offend our neighbor** in any way, or might wound modesty or religion; secondly, all words which might **scandalize others** or teach them wrong; thirdly, all words which might **lead others into sin.** It is urgent to be very greatly on our guard, to offend in nothing, above all when we speak a great deal: *"In the multitude of words there shall not want sin"* (Prov. x. 19).

Point III.— That we may always speak aright, all our words should be such as St. Paul prescribes to those in our class of life,— so as to prevent others from evil doing; **for edifica-**

tion: in order to lead them to the practice of virtue; **for exhortation**: in order to console them in their sufferings, and in the trials Catholics have to encounter; **for comfort** (1 Cor. xiv. 3). Let us examine our conduct with reference to this most important point in our spiritual life.

Saturday.

ON CHRISTIAN PEACE OF MIND AMIDST THE VICISSITUDES OF THE WORLD.

"*He hath done all things well*" (St. Mark vii. 37).

Point I.— When our Blessed Savior had cured the man deaf and dumb, the people said: **He hath done all things well.** The same should we say when we witness revolutions and unlooked-for events in the world, which we cannot explain to ourselves. Empires and kingdoms are overturned, families become extinct, religion dies out in various places, sin and impiety prevail, good people are persecuted, while the wicked prosper. We ought to say, God does or allows all these things for infinitely wise reasons. Therefore all must be wisely ordained, although I understand not the why.

Point II.— **Nothing is done,** nothing happens without God knowing all the circumstances, without His having, with unbounded rectitude, permitted everything with the most holy intentions and a power nothing can resist. Do not this wisdom, justice, holiness, power, deserve complete submission on our part?

Point III.— God wishes us, in all things that perplex us, first, **to feel the injury done** to religion and the offense against God; secondly, to do, so far as our state of life permits, whatever in us lies, to check evil and to further good and, when this has been done, ever to possess our souls in peace, in spite of everything that has puzzled or scandalized us.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

On the Love of God.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"
(St. Mark xii. 30).

Point I.— **God commands us to love Him,** and He calls this the first of all His commandments, because it is the first thing He insists upon, because the noblest, and because from this all others flow and to it all others return. What an honor for us! It were a boundless blessing to be allowed to love Him, but He commands us to do so, and is inflexible on the matter. He threatens us if we love Him not: *"What am I to Thee, Lord, that Thou shouldst command me to love Thee?"* says St. Augustine.

Point II.— This commandment is one strong reason for loving God, but not the only one. **God has loved us first,** loved us from all eternity: hence we ought to love him in return. He has given us all we have: gratitude demands our love. God is good, He is beautiful, nay, He is essential goodness and beauty: *"All things hanker after the good and beautiful,"* says St. Denis. To whom can we give our love more justly than to God and who deserves it more?

POINT III.—**Every conceivable advantage results from this love.** For in loving God we unite ourselves to Him; our sins are blotted out: all creation places itself at the service of those who love Him; the sweetness of His love soothes all the sorrows of life and takes away the bitterness of death. Lastly, paradise is its reward: *"What things God hath prepared for them that love Him"* (I COR. ii. 9). Is anything more needed to win our heart?

Monday.

HOW WE SHOULD LOVE GOD.

POINT I.—We should love God **with our whole heart:** *"With thy whole heart"* (ST. MARK xii. 30). He asks for all our heart, because He made it all. This means that we ought to love Him unfeignedly, unreservedly, from our very heart, not with our lips only and our tongue, as David says: *"And they loved Him with their mouth"* (PSALM lxxvii. 36). God wants deeds: these alone are real proof that our heart is sincere in its affection.

POINT II.—We should love God with our

whole soul: *"And with thy whole soul, with thy whole mind;"* that is to say, **entirely and undividedly.** All the powers of our body, our senses, thoughts, affections and desires should be for Him alone. Woe to the Christian whose heart is divided! Woe still more to the Christian who belongs wholly to creatures and in no wise to God; who, in his thoughts, affections and desires, seeks anything altogether apart from God!

POINT III.—*"And with thy whole strength:"* which means **earnestly, generously, constantly.** We should love Him always, since He is ever lovable and is every moment doing us good; we should love Him generously, overcoming everything which is opposed to this love: *"Who then shall separate us?"* (ROM. viii. 35); and we should love Him to the very end without interruption, as without cessation.

Tuesday.

SIGNS THAT WE LOVE GOD.

POINT I.—**To think often of God,** to take pleasure in conversing with Him, rejoice at whatever happens for His glory, grieve over every outrage offered to Him, wish Him all good, desire that He should be known, loved, feared and served by all creatures capable of rendering Him service: these are so many signs that we love God tenderly and heartily, are wholly His and delight in belonging to Him.

POINT II.— **To keep the commandments of God** and do His Holy will in all things is the characteristic sign that we love Him; everything else is subject to illusion: *"He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me"* (ST. JOHN xiv. 21). It is love like this, shown by our works and by our dutifulness in carrying out the commands of God, that binds us to Him and draws Him to us.

POINT III.— To suffer much **and be ready to suffer everything for God,** and so as not to separate ourselves from Him, is the most generous proof that we love Him: *"Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, etc.?"* (ROM. viii. 35.)

We must, however, propose to ourselves things within our reach and which we may have opportunity of doing. To wish to suffer martyrdom, or to go to China or Japan to do battle for the Church of God, and yet to complain and lose patience at a word that annoys us, at some trifle that is wanting to us is to mock God rather than to love Him. Let us examine into our love of God and our desire to suffer for His sake.

Wednesday.

ON THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"
(ST. MARK xii. 31).

POINT I.— The commandment to love our neighbor comes only second in order, but it is like the first, which is to love God. **It is divinely enjoined,** even as the first; supernatural, moral, absolute, universal, affirmative, perpetual, of indispensable obligation, as the first. These two loves are so closely united that one cannot exist without the other; they are born and die together in the soul. It is impossible to love God without loving our neighbor; to wish to do otherwise is to deceive ourselves, says St. John.

POINT II.— The rule Our Lord prescribes for loving our neighbor, is **to love him as ourselves,** that is, the love of our neighbor should be a copy of that which we have for ourselves. We defend ourselves from even the slightest harm, we desire all good and procure it for ourselves whenever we can. If we do all this for others, we love them; the rule is infallible.

POINT III.— We sin against this commandment whenever **our love is hurtful** to our neighbor, by doing to our brethren what does them harm and by showing ourselves accommodating in things which are unrighteous and sinful: this is to love them as the devil does. If we love our neighbor from self-interest or self-gratification, then are we merely loving ourselves. We keep not this commandment when we love others in word only and out of politeness and are loth to give ourselves any heed to oblige or be of service to them, or to do them all the good in our power. In other words, we must love one another holily, sincerely and to the utmost.

Thursday.

ON SOME MOTIVES FOR LOVING ONE ANOTHER.

POINT I.— We are united by ties of **a common nature**, a common **faith**, a common **hope.** We are men, children of the same Father; Christians, children of the same Mother, the Church; regenerated by one and the same baptism, fed at the same holy table, honored with the same name and the same profession; we possess the same hope of enjoying together the inheritance of our Father, namely, Heaven. Not to love each other when we have such motives for doing so would indeed be a great crime: *Non est laus, si diligitis; crimen est quod oditis,* says St. Jerome.

POINT II.— **Our consecrated life** obliges us to love one another. We have abandoned the world in order to find peace and unite ourselves with God; we shall never be blessed with these two graces unless we cherish brotherly charity. We serve the same Master, for the same end and, if we are Religious, are clothed with the same habit, living in the same house, separated from the world and persecuted by it, because we belong to Jesus Christ. If we love one another, we shall despise the blandishments of the world and laugh at its threats.

POINT III.— Gratitude, obedience, the love we owe to Our Lord, all oblige us to love one another. Jesus makes this a commandment which He calls His own commandment; He ever showed His predilection for it; He asked His Father for this charity and union; He gives Himself to us as our pattern: *"That you love one another, as I have loved you"* (ST. JOHN xv. 12). He appointed this love as the badge and token of His disciples and chosen friends. He promises His love, protection, grace and kingdom to those who keep this commandment.

Friday.

IN ORDER TO KEEP THE LAW OF LOVE WE MUST BEAR WITH ONE ANOTHER.

POINT I.— Jesus enjoins us to love one another, and St. Paul says that, to keep this commandment, we ought to bear with one another: *"Bear ye one another's burdens: so you shall fulfill the law of Christ"* (GAL. vi. 2). **Nothing is more necessary,** more **consoling,** more **just,** than this commandment, because, living much together and each one having his failings, faults and manifold wants, life would be unbearable were we to be lacking in the love which enables us to put up with each other and suffer one another; the evil would, however, be even greater still, were we to make the burden heavier and more intolerable to each other.

POINT II.— We should bear with one another in three things particularly: first, as regards **natural failings,** such as bad temper, sadness, childishness; secondly, **moral failings,** such as rudeness, ingratitude, outbursts of anger, insults, cutting remarks; thirdly, **spiritual or corporal necessities,** when some one suffering from one of the many reverses of life has need of our sympathy, or of relief in sickness and poverty. We should make the burden of others lighter by taking some portion on ourselves.

POINT III.— Through such compassion, relief and help given to our neighbor, we fulfill the law of Jesus Christ, Who has **given us an example** how to keep it: *"As I have loved you."* He has pitied our wretchedness, has relieved it and has taken it upon Himself in order to deliver us from it.

Saturday.

ON THE PITY WE OUGHT TO HAVE FOR OUR NEIGHBOR, AND THE HELP WE SHOULD GIVE HIM.

POINT I.— To be moved with the pity which makes us resemble our Heavenly Father, we should **ponder** earnestly over **our neighbor's many troubles.** The wounded man on the road to Jericho was poor, they had stripped him of his garments, he was in sorry plight, covered with wounds, abandoned and helpless. How many do we not see day by day in the like or even in a worse condition, when two so terrible evils come upon the soul, reduced through sin to the last degree of misery, mortally wounded and abandoned by God. Does such a one not deserve our pity?

POINT II.— Our compassion for our neighbor **should not be profitless.** The Samaritan was touched with sorrow when he saw this man so seriously wounded; he leaped from his mule to place him upon it; gave money that he might be taken care of, after having first dressed his wounds; charged the host of the inn to take care of him. This is indeed to love and be charitable. *"Go and do thou in like manner"* (ST. LUKE x. 37), said Our Savior. Let us render all the service we can to our neighbor in his spiritual distress.

POINT III.— Those who **ought to be most compassionate** to the misfortunes of their neighbor are often least so; ecclesiastics are sometimes among the number; often laymen are more tender-hearted and charitable. The Priest and the Levite passed by without troubling themselves about the poor wounded man; they concerned themselves not about him: a Samaritan alone relieves him. We should glory in imitating in this respect all sympathizing and charitable lay-people.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE WAY THAT THE WICKED BAND TOGETHER.

"There met Him ten men that were lepers" (ST. LUKE xvii. 12).

POINT I.— The ten lepers, united in their common misery, represent the union that exists between sinners, though otherwise so often divided by conflicting interests. They combine **to persecute the good.** The ways of those who live piously being contrary to their own, the wicked all feel the same estrangement and aversion in regard to them; they join together to blame them, curse them, nay, if they could, they would destroy them. Let us conceive a great horror of such fellowship in guilt.

POINT II.— The wicked league together in order to make themselves **feel at ease in their sinful life.** The sight of the behavior of the good would act as a continual reproach to them: hence they avoid their society. But the presence of their fellow-sinners causes them no reproach.

POINT III.— The wicked unite together in order to have some kind of **warranty for their sinfulness.** They would be horrified at themselves were they alone vicious. Hence the necessity for them to seek out individuals resembling them and frequent their company, that they may without shame and remorse satisfy their passions. If they become not outwardly united to the bad, they are at least one in mind and one in heart.

The just who are lukewarm are not free from this fatal inclination to be emboldened by the example of others. They love those who resemble them in laxity and prefer their society, when they sought to associate with the fervent, in order to rouse themselves by their example. With whom do we delight to live and to converse?

Monday.

ON BEING IN A STATE OF SIN AND A STATE OF GRACE.

The ten lepers "were made clean" (ST. LUKE xvii. 14).

POINT I.—Leprosy is a very distressing and all but incurable disease, which disfigures the person and renders him repulsive. For this reason lepers are banished from intercourse with men and even from the precincts of towns. A soul in a state of sin is something still more horrifying; the terrible discomforts accompanying sin, the despair of a cure unless God interfere by some act of extraordinary mercy, the loathsome ugliness which disfigures the sinner, these are so many points of resemblance that sin bears to leprosy. Let us dread falling into so fearful a state, as well as that into which we cast ourselves by disorderly affection for sinful objects: *"They became abominable, as those things were which they loved"* (Os. ix. 10).

Point II.— The soul, freed from sin and the deformity ensuing from it, is **beauteous**, pleasing and lovable in the sight of God and of the angels; it is healthy, peaceful and full of life and vigor to do good and decline from evil. The sanctifying grace within is the cause of this beauty, health and life. Let us take as much care to preserve it as we do to keep the life, health and pleasing appearance of our body.

Point III.— To be healed of our leprosy and acquire beauty and health of soul, Jesus Christ has provided a **remedy** through His Blood and by His merits, and for their application He prescribes nothing but the most easy means. Baptism removed this first leprosy from our soul; if we fall back into sin, contrition and confession are infallible remedies and are in our power through the grace of God.

Tuesday.

THE SENTIMENTS WE OUGHT TO ENTERTAIN CONCERNING OUR SINS.

Point I.— The lepers were **aware of their disease,** of the foul smell, of the unsightliness of their disgusting disease, of the horror which every one felt towards it; and knowing this they kept themselves at a distance, not daring to approach the Savior, Who alone could heal them. Our shame and humiliation ought to be still greater after our sins, because sin is a voluntary evil, which leprosy was not. We ought to be ashamed of our cowardice, malice, ingratitude and of the wrong we have done to God. Such humiliation would be a means for obtaining the cure of our diseases and the restoration of our original seemliness.

POINT II.— The lepers, persuaded of the goodness and power of Our Lord, lifted up their voices and cried out aloud, showing **unbounded confidence.** We must cherish a like trust when, touched with horror at our sins, we fly to God to find the remedy for them. The greater our miseries, the greater pleasure will God have in manifesting His mercy. Let us therefore approach the throne of this mercy, according to the advice of St. Paul: *"Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace"* (HEB. iv. 16), and entreat forgiveness from God for our past sins and strength to avoid them in future.

POINT III.— After having been cured of our diseases, let us **with grateful heart thank our God,** Who has delivered us from them. Let us imitate the gratitude of the leper when healed. Our diseases were once greater than his; and if God has preserved us from relapsing into them, our gratitude should be only the more abounding.

Wednesday.

HOW WE SHOULD ASK FOR OUR CONVERSION.

"*There met Him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off; and lifted up their voice*" (ST. LUKE xvii. 12, 13).

POINT I.— We must first **go into the presence of Jesus** Christ: "*There met Him.*" Notwithstanding the infinite distance separating the sinner from God, he should, aided by preventing grace, begin to approach Him with the desire to be converted and by ceasing from sin. Without thus drawing near, he could not address his prayer to God; it would not pierce heaven, because it would not spring from the heart.

POINT II.— We must **ask for our conversion with humility.** The ten lepers, though they went to meet Jesus Christ, yet remained at a distance from Him: "*Who stood afar off.*" This was not only because the law forbade them to mix with other men, but also because the humiliation caused by their sad condition urged them not to approach nearer. Humility is the chief quality of the prayer of a sinner beseeching God for his conversion. Not only should he pray from afar, *a longe,* but from the depths of his misery and nothingness: "*Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord*" (PSALM cxxix. 1).

POINT III.— We must **ask for it with fervor.** The lepers "*lifted up their voice.*" A sinner is the enemy of God and the slave of the devil;

he is no longer heir to the kingdom of heaven and deserves hell. If, therefore, he feel his sad condition, it is not moans alone, but loud cries that he should utter; he ought to lift up his voice and cry mercy until God takes pity upon him. Are we very sure that we are in a state of grace? The mere doubt of this should excite our groans and cries.

Thursday.

ON THREE MOTIVES CONTAINED IN THE LEPERS' PRAYER FOR A SINNER TO HAVE CONFIDENCE.

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

POINT I.— The first is the Name of **Jesus.** How is it possible for a sinner not to hope when he pronounces this sweet Name? He is asking for his conversion from the Savior Who came into the world to wean us from sin and died for us to merit our pardon. What then can the sinner fear? Will it cost Jesus Christ more to convert and forgive those in sin than it cost Him to die for them? Let us pronounce the Name of Jesus in temptations to discouragement at sight of our frailty and when harassed by extravagant fears, suggested sometimes by the devil, as to the remission of our sins.

POINT II.— The second motive for trust is in the name of **Master.** Jesus Christ is a Master Who loves His disciples so much as to give them the name of friends: *"I have called you* *friends"* (St. John xv. 15); and He prayed to His Father in a very special manner for these disciples: *"Keep them in Thy Name"* (St. John xvii. 11). What sorrow the ruin of Judas caused Him! With what kindness did He not forgive St. Peter!

Point III.—The third motive for confidence is in these words: **Have mercy on us.** This is like saying to God: We do not lay before Thee our merits in order to draw down Thy mercy, but plead rather our profound misery and our extreme wretchedness. Yes, O good God, our sins and Thy goodness are our only titles to the forgiveness which we crave from Thee. *"Have mercy on us."* The Sacred Heart of Jesus cannot withstand this prayer; let us then use it frequently.

Friday.

On Gratitude and Thanksgiving.

Point I.—Out of the ten lepers one only came to thank Our Lord. The number of the ungrateful is beyond counting, and **our ingratitude** is never so great as when God is concerned. Every moment He is heaping blessings upon us, yet we give not a thought to them! We do not thank Him for them! Day by day we offend our kind Benefactor! We even use His benefits against Himself! Such ingratitude shows how undeserving we are that God should be good to us, since He loses everything that He confers upon us. Our ingratitude stays the flow of His favors: it is a burning blast that dries up the fountain-head of His mercy. To be ungrateful to men is the blackest of crimes. What then is it to be ungrateful to God?

POINT II.— **Gratitude**, on the contrary, **betokens goodness of heart**; it shows that we are worthy of the blessings which God confers upon us; it urges Him to bestow fresh favors. It is the most efficacious of all prayers: *"Pray with thanksgiving,"* says St, Paul (PHILIP iv. 6); it is the only return God asks from us. Let us therefore call to mind the general and particular blessings we have received from God, natural and supernatural, spiritual and corporal; and let us acknowledge joyfully that there is not a moment of our life in which He is not doing us good.

POINT III.— We cannot return God benefit for benefit; to do this would be the perfection of gratitude, but we owe Him at least three things: 1st, the **remembrance of His benefits**; 2nd, **love** of Him from Whom we receive them; 3rd, **blessing and giving of thanks.**

Saturday.

"There is no one found to return to give glory to God but this stranger" (St. Luke xvii. 18).

Point I.— Such **ingratitude is very common.** Out of ten lepers whom Jesus had cured, nine were Jews, that is to say, they belonged to a nation which had been ever privileged; yet not one of them came to return thanks to Jesus Christ; the Samaritan alone fulfilled this duty. We, too, all of us, know many persons specially favored as to natural disposition, the aids of religion, ay, and even of temporal goods, who are more lukewarm in the service of God than those who are all but destitute of help. Often even a secret pride and a vain complacency in the gifts of God are the only feelings entertained by those wanting in gratitude. Are we not of their number?

Point II.— Such **ingratitude is** extremely **insulting to God.** That an enemy should affront us is not surprising; but indifference on the part of a friend can only be understood on the supposition that he is wanting in heart; this is a kind of contempt which fills a tender-hearted person with utter desolation.

Point III.— This ingratitude is **very fatal to privileged souls.** A devoted heart is made sore when it does not meet with return of affection; and love disregarded changes into hate. Hence specially favored persons who live in a state of lukewarmness must expect not only the withdrawal of grace, but a loathing and aversion on God's part which will be to them the cause of their eternal ruin. They will fall to rise no more, and the disorder of their life will perhaps be as scandalous as their previous conduct had been edifying. We see too many examples of this; let us not add ourselves to the number.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

"*No man can serve two masters*" (St. Matt. vi. 24).

Point I.—**Nothing is more glorious than to serve God:** *Servire Deo regnare est.* If the dignitaries of a sovereign take pride in their office, if they are looked up to and honored by reason of their position, how great must be the dignity of a servant of God, the King of kings! We see, moreover, that as soon as one of God's servants is known to be such, he is sincerely esteemed and honored; whereas the deference paid to servants of an earthly monarch is an outward shew paid simply out of mere ceremony.

Point II.—**Nothing is sweeter or more agreeable than the service of God.** His yoke is easy to bear, and His burden is light; we can run forward while bearing it, and the interior consolations which God pours into the soul of a faithful servant prevent him from feeling any hardness in his toil.

Point III.—**Nothing is more profitable than** the service of God, whether in time or eternity. A moment of labor obtains an eternal recompense. God promises to His servants the same happiness that He Himself possesses. *"Well done, good and faithful servant, . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"* (St. Matt. xxv. 21).

Point IV.— **Nothing is more necessary** than to serve God. This is what we are made for. Not to serve God is to lose all; to serve Him with loyalty and steadfastness is to gain everything.

Monday.

On the Difference between the two Masters, God and the World.

"No man can serve two masters" (St. Matt. vi. 24).

Point I.— **To serve God** is to know Him, fear, love, honor, praise Him, obey His orders and do everything for His greater glory. Is there any other master to whom we ought to render such-like service? Can we then justly refuse to give it to God? He created us, protects us and provides for us. We belong to Him by numberless titles; we belong to Him alone; He detests a divided heart: *"He requires thee wholly, Who made thee wholly."*

Point II.— **The world,** wherein the devil has sway, is a master whose service would be most irksome, were we to reflect ever so little upon the matter. It is **a hard master** in the service it exacts; it crushes its servants with labors, griefs and anxieties. It is unfaithful to its promises; they who trust it find themselves deceived. To lean on it is to lean on a reed which breaks and lets those who seek its support fall and wound themselves. *"It is broken and kills,"* says the Holy Spirit. The world is an ungrateful master, refusing to give pay for services rendered, incapable indeed of giving it, if ever there were the wish to do so. Happy they who have declined to engage themselves to so cruel a master!

POINT III.— **God,** on the contrary, **is a gentle Master,** easy to satisfy, faithful to promises, liberal in rewards. Happy they who are pledged to His service alone, and happier still are they who perform with exactness all that their compact binds them to.

Tuesday.

ON DELUSIONS IN GOD'S SERVICE.

POINT I.— We delude ourselves in God's service, when we **serve Him in thought only.** It is easy to have a lofty idea of God, and to believe that He deserves our service; such kind of service binds us, however, no further than to think of Him and to contemplate His perfections. Still, if we go not beyond this, we are not servants of God. The devils believe thus and tremble.

Point II.— We delude ourselves in God's service when we **serve Him by word only.** *"Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (St. Matt. vii. 21), says Jesus Christ. Prayers and other religious exercises are not acts of service to God, unless they be quickened by the spirit of piety and accompanied by the performance of God's holy will. Do we not make the service of God consist solely in the outward show of religion?

Point III.— We delude ourselves in God's service when we **serve Him by feelings only.** Feelings are deceptive, but we know them to be real when they disclose themselves by works. Good works are therefore of the essence of the service of God. Let us keep His commandments and suffer for Him, and we shall be His true servants.

Wednesday.

On Attachment to the Things of the World.

"You cannot serve God and Mammon"
(St. Matt. vi. 24).

Point I.— Such attachment is **unworthy of a Christian.** The only true riches of a Christian are grace and glory. These are the treasures he was created to possess, and those of this world were created for him as so many means to attain to grace and glory. Hence to attach oneself to the things of the world for their own sake is an insult and a subversion of order.

Point II.— Such attachment is **always dangerous.** It weakens the love of God by dividing the heart, causes the soul to grovel on the earth and prevents it from aspiring to its true heritage. However small, through indulgence, may be the increase of the like attachment, it will soon become the moving power of our whole conduct, the mainspring of all our thoughts and desires and the end of all our aims and pursuits.

Point III.— Such attachment is **often criminal.** It is so whenever it makes us prefer the good things of earth to those of grace and glory; whenever it makes us so fond of enjoyment that we are well satisfied with this world and cease to long for our everlasting home: for then the perishable goods of this world have become our treasure and our last end. Let us examine whether we are attached to earthly joys, and if so, to what extent.

Thursday.

ON THE CARE WHICH GOD TAKES OF THOSE WHO SERVE HIM.

"Be not solicitous" (ST. MATT. vi. 25).

POINT I.— God wishes to make with us **a compact** greatly to our advantage. He wishes us to think of Him, serve Him, honor him; while He undertakes to think of us and of everything which is necessary for us. Can we desire anything better? Should we not accept joyfully so glorious and advantageous a proposal? Should we not on all occasions say with holy David: *"The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want for nothing"* (PS. xxii. 1).

POINT II.— **God requires me to strive** that He may reign over myself and over others: *"Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God"* (ST. MATT. vi. 33); to labor to obtain heaven, which is God's kingdom and my inheritance; to use the means to reach it, namely, by leading the holy life of the just: *"His justice."* God appeals to me to do this; but it is more for my sake than for His own that He plies the request.

POINT III.— **God promises** on His side that we shall not want for the necessities or even the conveniences of life: *"And all things shall be added unto you."* He is our Father, Master and Sovereign Lord; should He not then provide what is needful for His children, His servants, His subjects? Few things are really necessary for us, and they are of small import, and He is so rich and so liberal! The experience of the past, when we have never wanted for anything, should convince us that He will not forsake us in the future.

Friday.

ON ANXIETY ABOUT THINGS OF THE WORLD.

"Be not solicitous" (ST. MATT. vi. 25).

POINT I.—God does **not forbid us to care for things of this world**; nay, rather, He wishes us to ask Him for them and labor to procure them as means of our salvation; to act otherwise were to tempt Him. He only forbids us to seek them anxiously. Such anxiety would be an insult to our good Father, Who has promised to provide for our needs, and Who is able to do so; it would further be hurtful to ourselves, because of the fruitless worry it would cause us. Be we as anxious as we may, we shall never obtain by our solicitude anything but what God intends to bestow. We cannot even add one cubit to our stature.

POINT II.—We should therefore **strive soberly** and quietly **to procure what is needed,** and, if God give it not, should believe that what we consider necessary is not so in reality. God will make it good to us in some other way. Let us then possess our souls in peace, submitting ourselves to the dispositions of Divine Providence.

POINT III.— God desires that before laboring to obtain what is needful for our body, we should cure what is **necessary for our soul,** since the soul is of far greater value than the body. The soul will have whatever is needful so soon as God reigns in it by His grace. This once achieved, the rest is as nothing, and all other things shall be added unto us: *"All these things shall be added unto you."* The privation of the things of this world would lead us, at worst, to death. But if we continue living in the fear of God, death would be the best thing that could happen to us: *"For to me to die is gain"* (PHILIP. i. 21).

Saturday.

ON SEEKING THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

"Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God and His justice" (ST. MATT. vi. 33).

POINT I.— We seek the justice of God, when we apply ourselves to **conforming our life to His commandments** and turn not away from them either to the right or the left. The maxims of the worldly-minded avail to make men polite, upright and just in the eyes of the world; but the justice of God is not found apart from the complete fulfillment of His holy law, inasmuch as this law is the fundamental and unchangeable rule of our actions.

Point II.— We seek the justice of God, when, after having gone astray from His commandments, we **expiate our sins by penance.** For it is not enough to return to the paths of justice by a change of life; it is necessary furthermore that penance should restore the disorder that caprice has introduced into our conduct. Such is the teaching of the holy Council of Trent.

Point III.— When we have found the justice of God, **we must maintain it** to the last, if we desire to reach the everlasting kingdom, which will be its recompense. The just only will enter there: *"Thy people shall be all just"* (Is. lx. 21). And the happiness we shall there enjoy is the peace resulting from our everlasting conformity with God's will, the source and rule of all justice: *"His place is in peace"* (Psalm lxxv. 3). Let us long for this happiness and labor to merit it by love and by seeking constantly the justice of God.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

On the Certainty of Death.

"Behold a dead man was carried out"
(St. Luke vii. 12).

Point I.— *"It is appointed unto men once to die"* (Heb. ix. 27). God created us immortal; but through sin was this high prerogative lost, nor can we **regain our immortality save through death.** Let us accept the sentence of death and console ourselves, when thinking of the horrors of the grave, by the hope of the resurrection.

POINT II.— **Everything** around us **preaches to us of death**; the years and the seasons which succeed each other, the produce of the earth which we consume, the streams which flow towards the sea never to remount to their source, our fellow-creatures whom we see daily going down into the tomb: *"He filled all things with death"* (WISD. xviii. 16). Why then do we think so little about death?

POINT III.— We have **within us the** message **which death** conveys to us day by day: *"We have in ourselves the answer of death"* (2 COR. i. 9). Everything we do has reference to self-preservation from death; it is ever about and around us and ever watching us, in order to execute the decree of God as soon as issued. The diseases which attack us, and perhaps the gradual weakening of our constitution, are even now warning us that our end is not far distant. Let us be ever ready.

Monday.

ON DEATH.

On the Son of the Widow of Naim.

POINT I.— **Young people may die early.** Youth, strength and health cannot withstand death. Not only the death of this young man in the gospel, but also daily experience convinces us of this truth. It is folly to put off to the time of old age what God requires from us for His service and our salvation, since it is uncertain whether that old age will ever come.

POINT II.— Young people may soon die, and the **old cannot possibly live long.** We are strangely blinded: we have but a short time to live, yet our thoughts, wishes and plans are such as though we never were to die. Death is near at hand, and yet our one thought is of living.

POINT III.— The **old age God esteems** is not that of years, which whitens the hair and furrows the face; it is **a virtuous** and innocent **life.** We die old, however young we be when we die, if we live holily; we die in infancy, though we may have lived for a century, if our life has been imperfect. Let us not wish to live a long, so much as a holy, life.

Tuesday.

WHAT DEATH IS.

POINT I.— Death is an **everlasting separation from all the things** of this world. For one who is dead the blue sky, the stars, the air, the earth, honors, riches, pleasures, relatives, friends, are all no more. The severing by death is complete. Even the body crumbles into dust.

Let us then fix our affections on God alone, since He is all that will remain to us.

POINT II.— Death is **our entry into the other world,** the world of spirits. There we know things no longer through the senses; but we see everything, just as it is in itself, by the eyes of the spirit. Let us try, so far as possible, to form some idea of the impression this new order of things will produce upon us. How amazed shall we then be at our present illusions, and with what terror the clear sight of all our sins will affright us!

POINT III.— Death is **the irrevocable decision of our eternal lot,** be it heaven or be it hell. After death will come the judgment, and the tree will remain for ever on that side on which it has fallen, says the Holy Spirit: *"In what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be"* (ECCLES. xi. 3). The sad separation from all most dear to us, the breaking off from everything here below, the entrance into the other world, the fixed sentence of our fate for eternity, in heaven or in hell, for ever and evermore, this is the true meaning of that little moment we term death. Are we given to thinking of this?

Wednesday.

ON THE PROFIT WHICH WE SHOULD GAIN FROM THE SIGHT OF FUNERAL PROCESSIONS.

"*And a great multitude of the city was with her*" (ST. LUKE vii. 12).

POINT I.— The sight of a funeral procession should make us meditate seriously that **some day people will be** present **at our own** and that the corpse that we now have to bear or accompany to the grave is crying out to us ever as the spirit of Samuel did to Saul: "*To-morrow thou shalt be with me.*" It is seldom that at such scenes this sad thought does not occur to us, but because it is sad, we allow it to pass away from the mind with the occasion that evoked it.

POINT II.— The sight of a funeral procession should make us reflect that the course of ages is nothing else than **one large funeral procession.** Not only are funerals taking place on earth uninterruptedly, and many at the same time, but from our very entrance into the world we all are journeying onward to the grave. The only difference herein between the living and the dead is that the road by which the dead reach their grave is a little shorter, and they have to be borne to it, whilst the living are taking themselves to their own grave.

POINT III.— The sight of a funeral procession should suggest a thought more salutary still, that **of souls** which **the devils are continually marshaling to hell.** With the eyes of faith, we can see on every side these processions of dead souls, to which living bodies serve as coffins. We should be touched with pity for their awful condition and unite ourselves with their Mother, the Church, following them as she weeps, endeavoring to move the Sacred Heart of Jesus to restore them to true life.

Thursday.

ON THE TEARS SHED OVER THE DEAD.

"Weep not" (ST. LUKE vii. 13).

POINT I.— When the Wise Man tells us to weep for a dear friend: *"My son, shed tears over the dead"* (ECCLUS. xxxviii. 16), he recommends to us what is **a duty both of good conduct and benevolence,** which from supernatural motives we should make meritorious; for since death is in itself, as St. Chrysostom says, of the number of things indifferent and the fulfillment of God's will, it seems that instead of weeping over those that are bowing to its verdict, we should rejoice rather that God has withdrawn them from the miseries of the world. Yet death, considered in its consequences, being the greatest of blessings or the most terrible of misfortunes, there are amongst the good those over whom our faith does not allow us to weep, while there are others over whom faith would have us mourn.

POINT II.— Faith does not ask us to **weep over**

the death of the just. They have reached the harbor, ofttimes after many storms; their salvation is assured, and they are united with the angels and saints in the everlasting possession of God. Let us therefore be glad rather than grieve at their happiness; let us thank God, to Whom we must attribute it and rouse ourselves to merit it by living as they did.

POINT III.— Faith calls upon us to **weep over sinners who die in their impenitence.** During their life we could comfort ourselves to some degree as regards their wickedness by the hope that they might become converted; but in hell, into which death has cast them, there is no longer room for conversion. They are, and will be for ever, in torment, banished from their God, exiled from their fatherland. What can be more deserving of our tears, once again says St. John Chrysostom: *"These deserve our lamentations, our groans, our tears."* Besides, by weeping over the death of sinners, we shall live in fear lest our death may ever be like theirs.

Friday.

ON THE WISH FOR DEATH.

"Weep not" (ST. LUKE vii. 13).

POINT I.— Three things should inspire a Christian, and much more one specially consecrated to God, with the wish to die. The first is **the miseries of life,** by reason of which we suffer constant sorrow. We see religion scoffed at and the Church afflicted in various ways by a world seated in iniquity and malignity, and we individually are incessantly exposed to the diseases and sufferings of the body, as well as to the sorrows and troubles of the soul. How then can we love so wretched a life?

Point II.— The second thing that should make us wish to die and so to enter into heaven is the **depravity** which is **everywhere so rife.** We see scarcely anything but injustice, godlessness and impurity around us; sin, like a torrent, sweeps away people of all conditions and ages; we are ourselves continually in the midst of temptation, and we yield to it. After all our resolutions and all our promises, we are ungrateful, unjust and disobedient towards our God, our Sovereign Lord and our Father. Ought we not to long for heaven, where there will be no more sin? There we shall have nothing to fear, and shall be perfectly happy.

Point III.— Finally, **the love of God** and of Jesus Christ should make us wish to die, that we may go to heaven, see Him in His kingdom, possess Him and be for ever happy in His company. Let us therefore try to conceive this desire. Our detachment from the world, hatred of sin and love of God will be at once the cause and the effect of our desire. Having this wish, we shall harbor no other.

Saturday.

ON CONFIDENCE AT THE HOUR OF DEATH.

POINT I.— Experience teaches us that those who during life seem to expect everything at the last moment from God's mercy, and in such expectation live on recklessly, are filled with agonizing fears, when the time comes to die, and scarcely dare to appeal to His mercy. Those, on the other hand, who dreaded death during lifetime, **have entire trust at the last hour:** *"Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long,"* says the Wise Man, *"because thou shalt have hope in the latter end"* (PROV. xxiii. 17, 18). Let us examine our conscience, so that we may know to which class we belong.

POINT II.— The fear of God, which brings such trust at death, **should be great and abiding.** It is a small matter to have this fear only under given circumstances; we must watch day by day, and every moment, without ceasing. If this fear accompany us always, it will preserve us from evil-doing and move us to do what is right: thus it is that it produces trust.

POINT III.— But the most grievous thought is, that all this fear of God, this careful avoidance of evil and this practice of dutifulness avail to give us great hope, it is true, but **never complete assurance** at the moment of death. *"Thou shalt have hope in the latter end."* We shall still remain in uncertainty as to our state. Now if saints, who possessed the fear of God and who always did what was right, had reason to fear, what will become of the wicked, who have lived without any fear of God?

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON INTERCOURSE WITH THE WORLD.

"*When Jesus went into the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees*" (ST. LUKE xiv. 1).

POINT I.—Jesus Christ had intercourse with the world because such intercourse, though so dangerous, is a necessary consequence of the ordinary life most men have to live and in particular of the life of apostolic men, to whom above all Jesus wished to serve as an example. Now in the gospel of the day He gives us the principal reasons which are our warrant in keeping up social intercourse with the world. **The first is necessity.** In our state of life we may often have such reason for frequenting social gatherings; still, we should take care not to push it too far: even Christ Jesus did not escape the blame of the Pharisees; they wished to make Him appear a man who loved good cheer and was the friend of sinners: "*Behold a man that is a glutton, a drinker of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners*" (ST. LUKE vii. 34). To what severe criticisms shall we not expose ourselves if we are seen constantly in the world, and above all without any real necessity, at entertainments, we who have especially consecrated ourselves to the service of God?

Point II.— The second reason is **some corporal work of mercy.** Jesus Christ went to eat at the house of this chief of the Pharisees, because He knew that there would be a sick person to be healed there. Our intercourse with the world will not be censured when charity is our motive for it; or if it be blamed, God will not impute to us such pharisaical scandal — scandal, that is, taken though not given.

Point III.— The third reason is **zeal for the salvation of our neighbor.** Jesus Christ knew moreover that during the repast there would be an opportunity of giving the guests a lesson they sadly needed, a lesson of humility. If we, in our intercourse with the world, propose to ourselves a like motive, we shall carry out the work of apostolic men. But we must take every precaution to have purity of intention, prudence, and modesty; for these ought ever to accompany our works of zeal.

Monday.

THEY WATCHED JESUS CHRIST.

"They watched Him" (St. Luke xiv. 1).

Point I.— **We are watched** in the world **by the good,** however little belief or confidence they may have in us. For simplicity, which is the virtue of innocent souls, causes them to observe and readily to imitate those whom they look upon as their superiors in virtue; and this is even more the case when these are their superiors in position. Let us therefore be always on our guard to say nothing and do nothing that might work them harm; what seemed to be a trifle has sometimes worked serious consequences.

Point II.— **We are watched by the wicked,** who, out of envy, seek to censure and would like to find some semblance of authority for their disorderly life in our example. They seek excuses for their greatest vices in our slightest faults, and for their guilty omissions in the smallest of our shortcomings. Let us live in such a manner as to oblige them to do what the enemies of Jesus Christ did, that is, to invent the evil they charge us with, or to see it only where it does not in reality exist.

Point III.— **We are watched by the devils,** who are our bitterest enemies. They surround us continually in order to keep a register of our acts, that they may accuse us of them at the judgment. They will accuse even the saints. How much then ought we not to fear their malice, and with what watchfulness ought we not to live!

Tuesday.

ON THE MEANS OF OVERCOMING THE ENVY OF OUR ENEMIES.

"*They watched Him*" (ST. LUKE xiv. 1).

POINT I.— Our Redeemer went to eat at the house of a Pharisee who had invited Him. He went there in order to win to God the Pharisee and others who were to be present at the feast. After having admired the goodness, condescension, and zeal of our Divine Savior, we should set before us all these virtues for imitation in the intercourse charity compels us to have with the world. Let us also consider that Jesus shows still greater charity and goodness to us in the Sacred Banquet of the Eucharist, to which He Himself invites us.

POINT II.— The Pharisees watched Christ, that they might pry out something to find fault with in His conduct; but the modesty of His words, the holiness of His actions and of His whole behavior, His disinterested zeal, placed Him beyond the reach of the shafts of envy. Let us glorify the conduct of Our Savior, and when obliged to converse with men, let us imitate His modesty, holiness and zeal.

POINT III.— In the world, we are watched as our Blessed Lord was watched. Envy, jealousy, mistaken zeal, unprovoked hatred, have persecuted us so far and will apparently continue to do so; but enemies have been put to shame by the protection of heaven: irreproachable behavior has triumphed over all calumnies. We shall overcome them likewise, if we behave in such manner as to offer no just cause of reproach.

Wednesday.

DROPSY A TYPE OF AVARICE.

"*And behold there was a certain man before Him that had the dropsy*" (ST. LUKE xiv. 2).

POINT I.— **A dropsical person is full of acrid water,** which only serves to cause suffering by reason of the swelling it produces, and which destroys his constitution instead of sustaining it. Riches puff up the miser; he revels in them and takes pride in them. They stifle all good feelings within him, weigh down his soul to earth, take from him all power of lifting himself up to God and of performing actions worthy of heaven. Oh fearful disease! Let us beseech God to preserve us from it: "*Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies and not to covetousness*" (PSALM cxviii. 36).

POINT II.— The more water there is in a dropsical man, **the more thirsty he becomes.** The miser never says: It is enough; but, as Scripture says, he adds money to money, field to field and house to house, as if he wanted to be the sole owner of the whole world. Are we not infected with the vice of avarice, and is it not the cause of the thousand petty anxieties that absorb and torture our minds?

Point III.— A dropsical man can scarcely be cured save by puncture, and even then the cure is seldom complete. For a thorough restoration of health, the cause of the disease must be removed, and it scarcely ever is got rid of. If God, through His mercy, takes away a miser's riches, He relieves him in his spiritual dropsy, but the sick man will never be completely cured until grace shall have banished avarice from his heart: even when stripped of everything, he will still be wealthy in desire. Let us fear greatly an evil so difficult of cure.

Thursday.

On Zeal for the Salvation of our Neighbor.

Point I.— Our Blessed Lord told the Pharisees that if we suffer through the loss of an animal, we should feel still more acutely the loss of a fellow-being. We should not think of leaving an animal to perish if it belonged to us, or to one of our friends; we should do all in our power to draw it out of a pit, had it fallen into one; we should have no scruple in working for such an object even on a day consecrated to the service of God. The souls of our fellow-creatures belong to God Who created them, to Jesus Christ Who redeemed them, to ourselves by reason of the many ties which bind them to us; and yet their ruin does not interest us.

Point II.— Were we able to preserve our **neighbor from death**, fire, or degrading torture, we should unhesitatingly **strive to do so.** We can prevent him from dying an eternal death and from burning in hell; shall we remain indifferent about such a matter? What joy would it be for me could I pluck from hell some wretched sinner who is burning there! I do rescue one when I prevent a person from being cast into it.

Point III.— If we could **obtain a magnificent estate** for some one known to us, we would gladly do so; we can procure for him immense and eternal treasures, yet we neglect doing this. What great joy it would cause me to know that there is in heaven one single saint whom I have guided thither! The dignity of a human soul, the evils from which it may be delivered and the good which may be obtained for it, should rouse our zeal.

Friday.

ON ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

Point I.— We should exercise zeal **with diligence.** Jesus Christ profited by every opportunity of instructing the ignorant and correcting sinners, and when they did not come to Him of their own accord, He sought them out and induced them to come. Zeal is very weak if it never offers the invitation; it no longer deserves the name of zeal, when, on occasion presenting itself of doing good, it waits through faint-heartedness or mistaken prudence for some other opportunity.

Point II.— We should exercise zeal **with prudence**, alike as to time, place and other circumstances; but should beware of bestowing the name of prudence on our faint-heartedness.

Point III.— We should exercise zeal **with charity.** Jesus Christ did not provoke the Pharisees when He explained to them how mistaken was their idea that a sick person might not be healed on the Sabbath; on the contrary, by a comparison, He used what was reasonable in their mode of acting to correct what was wrong in it. It is rare that passion does not leave some glimmering of reason in the mind of sinners. Let us appeal to it in order to lead them to good, and show them that the fervency of our zeal is inspired by no other motive than their own advantage.

Point IV.— We should exercise zeal **without discouragement.** Jesus Christ did not convert all the sinners to whom He addressed the words of life, and all save not themselves, though He died for them. Besides, God has His times and seasons; often, by persevering in the exercise of zeal, we obtain what we had all but despaired of. Let us pray, instruct and reprove with patience; God will do the rest.

Saturday.

ON EVANGELICAL HUMILITY.

POINT I.—"*When thou art invited . . . sit not down in the first place*" (ST. LUKE xiv. 8). Let us think **how deserving of contempt** before God, Who knows what we are, is the vain esteem we entertain of ourselves; how much men abominate it, whenever they see us unduly preferring ourselves and trying to give ourselves airs and place ourselves above them. This of itself should be enough to make us avoid this vice, even if we did not know that it is punished in the present life by the pangs, anxieties and sense of shame, that accompany it.

POINT II.—"*Sit down in the lowest place.*" Modesty, humility and deference are **held in esteem by all men**: every one loves and honors these virtues. God takes pleasure in exalting those who practice them; but these virtues must be real, and proceed from the heart; for the modesty, humility and deference which are the outcome of craft and dissimulation are more despicable and deserving of scorn than pride itself.

POINT III.—"*Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled*" (ST. LUKE xiv. 11). It is a law enacted by God Himself, and carried out without exception, that **pride shall be followed by shame** and humiliation both in this life and in the next and that modesty and humility shall be rewarded by glory real and everlasting. Let us dread the shame and confusion of the proud in hell. Let us put a correct value on the glory prepared in heaven for the humble, and then shall we despise the glory of the world, and its contempt will not grieve us.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE SCIENCE OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

"Which is the great commandment in the law?" (ST. MATT. xxii. 36).

POINT I.— **The first of sciences,** that surpassing all others, is the **knowledge of God** Himself. God knows Himself, and He knows everything else, hence He loves Himself and all else in Himself. Let us refer all knowledge to this. Let us contemplate and love God in the various kinds of knowledge He has been pleased to bestow on us, considering them as emanations from His infinite light.

POINT II.— It is the only **necessary science.** We can dispense with all others, but we cannot do without this; in possession of all other knowledge, we may yet be miserable, but with this we must be always happy. The most ignorant of mankind, if he know how to love God, is more wise than all the learned who love Him not.

POINT III.— It it the only science **which endures.** All other learning ends at death, after having cost us, at times, our whole lifetime. This, on the contrary, costs little to acquire and will last for ever.

POINT IV.— It is the only knowledge **which fully satisfies.** Other science satisfies the mind only, but often scarcely does even that. This, on the contrary, satisfies alike mind and heart; as soon as we possess this, we may say: *"What have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire on earth?"* (PSALM lxxii. 25). Let us ask God for full knowledge of His love, that we may profit by the meditations that are about to follow.

Monday.

ON THE GREATNESS OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

"This is the greatest and the first commandment" (ST. MATT. xxii. 38).

POINT I.— **This command is the greatest in its object.** This object is the love of the Being Who is above every other, of the Being Who is necessary, eternal, immense, almighty, immutable; Who is goodness, beauty, wisdom, justice, holiness by essence: our God, our King, our Father, our Master, our All. What can be greater, what more noble than to love Him?

POINT II.— **This command is the greatest in its necessity.** God could not have left us without it. For, as God is pre-eminently beauty and goodness and has given us all a heart capable of love, it was imperative that He should command us to love Him, or He would have been in contradiction with Himself.

Point III.— **This command is the greatest in its extent:** it excludes all the rest, and he who fulfills it, fulfills the whole law, because he has no other will than God's will, loves only what God loves, hates only what God hates, performs all that God commands and does nothing which God forbids. Let us therefore love God, and we shall not be just only, but shall be saints.

Tuesday.

ON THE CARE WE SHOULD TAKE TO EXAMINE OURSELVES AS TO WHETHER WE REALLY LOVE GOD.

Point I.— **This examination is most necessary.** The merit of our own good works, our salvation and our happiness in this world and in the next depend on the fulfillment of the chief commandment. If we have reason to believe that we really love God, we are at ease, in peace, in bliss; if, on the other hand, we are doubtful about this point, we are in the most painful anxiety, both as to our present and our future.

Point II.— **This examination is most difficult.** Do what we will, the love of creatures is continually tending to take possession of our heart and, often without our being aware of the fact, occupies it exclusively. The love of God should therefore surpass and rule over all the worldly affections which beset us, or it will not be a real love, and it is difficult to find out when it is real. The love of creatures may predominate in our heart while our exterior bearing seems faultless. The fear of hell is perhaps the only motive which prompts our actions, the sole check which keeps us in the path of duty; and oftentimes the preference we seem to give to God over things created is merely a sentimental appreciation.

POINT III.— **This examination is most salutary,** on account of the doubt it always leaves in our mind: for then we fear, humble ourselves, become watchful, mortified and fervent, in order that we may, so far as possible, make our vocation and election sure. We wish at least to love God, earnestly implore grace to love Him, and as He has promised to grant our prayers, we comfort ourselves with the hope of loving Him eventually, even if we do not love Him now.

Wednesday.

ON OUR WANT OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

POINT I.— This **lack of love shows contempt of God:** contempt in those who are acquainted with Him, since they know how lovable He is and nevertheless prefer the creature to Him; contempt in those who do not know Him, because they will not think of Him. This is a kind of disdain; it is as if we considered that God and His perfections do not deserve to occupy our mind. Let us often think of our God. We think of what we love, and the more we think of it, the more do we love it.

Thursday.

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE LOVE OF CREATURES.

POINT I.— The **love of God does not exclude all love for creatures.** As these possess lovable qualities which are a reflection of the divine perfections, we may love them, provided we refer our love of them to their infinite source and give always the preference to God. On the other hand, the love of creatures, whenever it becomes a love of preference to God, excludes true love of Him.

POINT I.— The **love of God satisfies the heart,** and if it leave any desire in this world, it is that of loving God ever more and more. The love of creatures on the contrary, leaves always a void in the heart. The love of God is accompanied with sweetness, that of creatures with bitterness. The thought, I love God and am loved by Him, consoles us abundantly under all misfortunes; the love of creatures, on the contrary, conveys but little consolation and is often the cause of our greatest troubles. Let us try to experience the advantages of loving God; we know but too well the evils which attend the love of creatures, even if we have loved them ever so little.

Point III.—The **love of God will last for ever** and find its reward in an incredible increase of intensity. The love of creatures, on the contrary, will end with them, and if, at death, it have surpassed the love of God, it will receive its punishment in the privations of all love, and in hatred of what is good. To love some day the all Good, or to love nothing worthy of love; to love infinitely, or to hate savagely, throughout eternity; such is the fixed alternative. We must make our choice.

Friday.

HOW TO PRESERVE OURSELVES IN GOD'S LOVE.

Point I.—We keep ourselves in the love of God **by avoiding sins** to which God has attached the deprivation of, and exclusion from, His Kingdom. St. Paul has given a list of these sins. Still, as slight faults weaken the love of God and lessen His graces, a heart that loves Him and fears everlasting ruin avoids them as much as possible. Are we doing this, and have we a lively horror of mortal sin?

Point II.—We preserve the love of God **by detaching ourselves from creatures.** For, although we do not actually prefer them to God, yet by not detaching ourselves from them we give ourselves up to them, cling to them insensibly, and in the end attachment to them gains possession of the heart and rules over it. Let us dread such danger and examine whether our attachment to creatures does not even now cause disquieting doubt as to whether we are loving God above everything else.

POINT III.—We preserve the love of God **by** often **making acts of this love.** By this means we prevent the love of creatures, continually tending to take possession of our heart, from taking root there and ruling over it; we maintain union with God, and begin even in this world to experience that eternal happiness which will consist in continual transports of divine love.

Saturday.

REASONS WHY WE SHOULD LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR.

"*The second commandment is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*" (ST. MATT. xxii. 39).

POINT I.—The commandment to love our neighbor is only an extension of **the command to love God.** God, by enjoining us to love Him by reason of His perfections, charges us also to love all those on whom He has imprinted traces of those perfections, and for the very reason that they do bear them; so that it is ever God we love when we love men. Even the most wicked cannot be excluded from our love, because they always bear about them some mark of God's perfections. Death in mortal sin can alone efface these tokens, and consequently the damned alone we are not commanded to love.

POINT II.— **All men are children of God by adoption.** We love children for their father's sake, and the love we have for the father, if it be real, should extend to the children.

POINT III.— All men are **destined to see,** love and **possess God eternally.** To wish them this happiness is therefore the principal, the essential, result of our love for them. We also owe them this wish, if we love God; for when we desire it, we desire the good of God. Such good is His rule over the hearts of His children, the homage and everlasting love of His creatures. How few Christians are there who love their neighbors for these reasons! Are these the motives of our love of God? If not, we love neither our neighbor nor God.

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE BLESSINGS JESUS HAS OBTAINED THROUGH HIS SACRED HUMANITY.

"*And entering into a boat, He passed over the water and came into his own city*" (ST. MATT. ix. 1).

POINT I.— Jesus Christ has caused His Sacred Humanity to **serve for our instruction.** In this most holy Human Nature He traveled through towns, villages and country places and crossed over lakes, that He might instruct the people. Happy they who heard and obeyed His teaching. It rests with us, if we will, to share their happiness: we possess His lessons in the holy gospels; let us read them with reverence, gratitude and docility.

Point II.— Jesus Christ has made His most Holy Humanity **serve for our redemption** by dying for us. Prostrate in spirit at the foot of His Cross, let us thank Him for this blessing, which is as wondrous as it is priceless; let us sympathize in His sufferings, repent of our sins and place our whole confidence in the merit of His Death.

Point III.— Jesus Christ has made His ever-blessed Humanity **serve for our sanctification** in the Holy Eucharist. He renews on the altar the sacrifice of the Cross, applies the fruit of it to us and feeds us with His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. Let us thank God for having obtained such great gifts for us through the holy Humanity of His Son. If we are still so ignorant, sinful and poor, it is because we do not profit by them. Let us fear the account of them we shall have to give.

Monday.

ON THREE REASONS FOR ZEAL FOR SOULS.

"*They brought to Him one sick of the palsy, lying in a bed*" (ST. MATT. ix. 2).

POINT I.— The **charity we ought to have for sinners** obliges us to labor for their conversion. Their malady is more dangerous than that of the man in the gospel stricken with palsy, since they are incapable of doing anything to gain heaven; they are in a state of sin and in danger of dying an everlasting death; on the road, in fact, to hell. By working for their conversion we shall snatch them from the way of perdition; shall procure for them health, strength, in short, life eternal; obtain for them unnumbered blessings.

POINT II.— The **love we owe God** obliges us to labor for the conversion of sinners. We gain for Him the glory of their conversion; bring back to Him the prodigal children so much loved by Him; give effect to the labors of His life, to His Blood and to His Death, and present Him souls who will bless Him eternally.

POINT III.— We ought to be zealous **out of love for ourselves.** He who converts a sinner gains invaluable blessings: he "*shall save his own soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins*" (ST. JAMES v. 20); he shall shine "*as a star*" (DAN. xii. 3); he gains the remission of his own sins, grace, holiness and everlasting happiness.

Numberless means have we for laboring for the conversion of sinners; the most efficacious is prayer: *"Pray one for another, that ye may be saved,"* says St. James (v. 16). Let us, however, combine will and action with prayer.

Tuesday.

ON THE HOPE WE OUGHT TO HAVE OF THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

"Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee" (ST. MATT. ix. 2).

POINT I.— We should **hope for the forgiveness of our sins** because God tells us, nay, even commands us to do so: *"Be of good heart."* He cannot gainsay Himself; heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass away. Let us bear in mind God's promises, that we may resist all temptations to despair and to immoderate fear.

POINT II.— We should hope for forgiveness of our sins because **we are the Children of God,** and He calls us by this loving name, telling us to hope in Him: *"Be of good heart, son."* When a rebellious child returns home, the father never doubts that his son's heart will be touched as soon as he hears himself addressed by the name of Son; forthwith confidence re-awakens in his heart. Why should we have less trust in the goodness of God, Who is the best of fathers?

POINT III.— We should hope the more for forgiveness of our sins, because it is **God** Who, inspiring us with the wish to obtain it, **works in us** the sorrow which is the **condition of its attainment.** They who presented the palsied man to Jesus Christ had in view only the care of the body; he himself probably at first had no other wish. But Jesus Christ, Who saw the palsy of the soul, gives the sick man the desire for his spiritual cure and therewith the sorrow necessary to obtain it. Without this Our Lord would not have said to him, "*Thy sins are forgiven thee.*" Let us ask God for contrition and excite ourselves to it; let us repent, sin no more and foster great hope.

Wednesday.

ON THE CAUSES OF EVIL JUDGMENTS.

"*Why do you think evil in your hearts?*"
(ST. MATT. ix. 4).

POINT I.— The **first cause is prejudice** and ignorance. The Scribes did not imagine they were judging Jesus Christ wrongly in believing He had been guilty of blasphemy in forgiving the sins of the paralytic, because they looked upon Jesus Christ as a man only; yet their sin amounted to this impiety. They should have examined the prophecies, and pondered the miracles of Jesus Christ: then they would have known that He was God and have employed their zeal in making Him known to their nation, instead of trying to compass His death. They who are most zealous for the glory of God are sometimes most liable to prejudice.

Point II.— The **second cause is our passions.** The Scribes did not love Jesus Christ. The miracles He worked and the admiration shown by the people filled them with envy; this sufficed to make them judge Him falsely. When we feel antipathy, hatred, or envy towards any one everything about him displeases us; we blame and condemn him on very slight grounds and impute unworthy motives to him even in the good we see him do. Verily this calls for a most serious examination on our part.

Point III.— The **third is our bad heart.** Full of faults, may be of vices even, tyrannized over by perverse inclinations, seeking only our own interest and satisfaction, influenced rarely by good intentions, frequently by very bad ones, we think that others resemble us and judge of them by ourselves. Simple and upright persons pass not evil judgments on their neighbor, but those do so who have depraved and wicked hearts. If we are induced therefore to think ill of others, it should be a real cause of alarm for us, unless such tendency displease us, or be mere play of the imagination.

Thursday.

"Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house"
(St. Matt. ix. 6).

Point I.— **Arise,** said Our Lord to the paralytic. Grace, conscience, and frequent inspirations have long been urging the same on us, to shake off our lukewarmness and bad habits, to give up our attachments and correct our failings; yet are we even now as torpid as if paralyzed. What a disgrace to us! Have we not reason to fear that God will leave us in our evil plight, since we choose to bide in it?

Point II.— **Take up thy bed,** upon which thou wert lying, and carry it away. After our healing, our past faults should serve to keep us sorrow-stricken, to humble us and help us to bear everything patiently, by reminding us that through our sins we have deserved something harder still and yet more humiliating.

Point III.— **Go into thy house.** After having been delivered from our sins, we should advance diligently towards our home, which is Heaven. We should employ our bodily strength and our whole mind in the endeavor to reach it. We should sorrow over all the days and moments that have been spent in aiming at some contrary purpose.

Friday.

ON THE SIGNS OF TRUE CONVERSION.

"Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house" (ST. MATT. ix. 6).

POINT I.— The first is **to arise.** A soul in mortal sin is dead and stricken to the ground. When, aided by grace, it breaks the bonds which held it down, when it rises towards God and holds itself upright, it may believe it is converted. But if it fall back straightway, its conversion was probably but apparent. When an invalid speedily relapses, we infer that He was not cured. Does not our frequent backsliding through lukewarmness afford reason to fear that we have never been completely cured of our spiritual languor and that in the end it will lead us on to our death?

POINT II.— The second is **to master our passions:** *"Take up thy bed."* The passions once served as a litter to our lifeless soul, and now it no longer consents to be borne thus about: on the contrary, it carries its inclinations, turning them towards what is right, and thus making all that formerly ministered to sin, help to repentance. Here, indeed, there is room to believe in a true conversion. Unless love and hatred — the two master-passions which set in motion all the others — be directed by us to objects adverse to what was their wont, there has been no real change.

POINT III.— The third is to return to oneself by **separation from the objects of our passions**: *"Go into thy house."* If a converted soul open itself anew to creatures, if it continue to expose itself to occasions of sin, then either there was no real cure, or else there will be a relapse.

Saturday.

ON THREE WAYS OF GLORIFYING GOD.

"The multitude seeing it, feared and glorified God" (ST. MATT. ix. 8).

POINT I.— We glorify God **inwardly in our soul**, by the lofty idea we form to ourselves of His greatness, infinite perfections and goodness; by the keen delight we feel in Him; by an ardent desire that He may be known, esteemed, loved and served by all creatures; by a sincere, and if we are able by an efficacious, will to obtain for Him such exterior gifts as we can bestow upon Him. Can our mind be occupied in a manner more holy, agreeable, or useful?

POINT II.— We glorify God **by our words**: first, by our praises, when we speak of, proclaim or teach His greatness and perfections; secondly, by our blessings, when we desire Him to receive our worship, love and service; thirdly, by our thanksgiving, when we humbly and gratefully declare that everything we have proceeds from Him. Let us often say: *"Bless the Lord, O my* *soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee"* (Psalm cii. 2).

Point III.— We glorify God **by our holy life.** We make known thereby that we feel ourselves honored by being in His service; that we believe and hope in Him and are His worshipers, disciples and children. Without saying a word, we sing His praises as do the heavens: *"The heavens show forth the glory of God"* (Psalm xviii. 1). We lead others to honor Him, to serve Him, and love Him: this is the outflow of the holiness of our life.

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

"He sent His servants to call them that were invited to the marriage" (St. Matt. xxii. 3).

Point I.— The nuptials spoken of by Jesus Christ are His union with His Church, and we see that to this spiritual Feast three invitations are given. The first is the **general invitation to salvation** sent to every one. It was given, from the beginning of the world, through the patriarchs and prophets, but men did not respond: *"And they would not come;"* so that before the coming of Jesus Christ the chosen were not the greater number. Let us adore the unsearchable ways of God with regard to mankind in early times and deplore the exceeding wickedness which rendered useless to so many the superabundant means of salvation they possessed.

Point II.— The second invitation was given **especially to the Jews,** whose law was simply the preparation for the gospel: *"Again He sent other servants."* At the coming of the Messias everything was ready for the wedding: *"All things are ready."* Yet the Jews would not see in Jesus Christ the fulfillment of the prophecies: *"But they neglected."* They were looking for a temporal savior and thought only of the things of this world. Some of them even put God's messengers to death: *"The rest laid hands on His servants, and having treated them contumeliously, put them to death."* We should wonder at this strange blindness of the Jews, of whom so few have entered the Church.

Point III.— The third is the **fresh invitation to all mankind,** made known by the preaching of the gospel throughout the world: *"As many as you shall find, call to the marriage."* The good and the bad have been called. *"With bad and good,"* the Church has been formed: *"And the marriage was filled with guests."* Let us thank God for having reserved us for this last invitation and act up to it by strictness in profiting by the means of salvation so abundant in His Church, that we may be present at the eternal marriage-feast for which these are only the preparation.

Monday.

ON THE BEHAVIOR OF THE GUESTS INVITED TO THE WEDDING-FEAST.

POINT I.— The **wedding-feast is the eternal happiness** that God prepares for us. He wishes us to enjoy it; invites us, presses us, entreats us to come to it; gives us liberally all the necessary means. Can I doubt, O my God, that Thy desire is to make me eternally happy? If I am not so, it will never be fault of Thine.

POINT II.— After all the loving designs of God concerning their everlasting salvation, **what are Christians now doing?** They refuse to go to the feast prepared for them in heaven; they excuse themselves, for the sake of mere trifles, and go *"one to his farm and another to his merchandise"* (ST. MATT. xxii. 5). They despise the means God accords them; they do so obstinately and overbearingly: *"Having treated them contumeliously, they put them to death."* Is not this to choose our own perdition deliberately? Does not our conduct resemble that of the invited in the gospel?

POINT III.— If, according to our mode of speaking, God is angry, and casts away for ever those who treat Him so shamefully, has He not reason to do so? Own we must that every Christian shut out from heaven richly deserves his fate, because he did not want to go there. This truth we must admit also in the case of a Religious, and even with still greater reason.

Let us then profit by the honor Our Lord has done us in bidding us to the feast.

Tuesday.

ON A THREEFOLD UNION OF OUR SOUL WITH GOD.

"A king who made a marriage-feast"
(ST. MATT. xxii. 2).

POINT I.— The first union we have with God **is through sanctifying grace,** which has made us children, heirs and friends of God; this is the wedding-garment that renders us pleasing to the Divine Bridegroom. Let us prefer this to all earthly riches, and if, in order to preserve it, it become necessary to lose all we have in the world, let us lose everything without lamenting.

POINT II.— The second union is **through the Holy Eucharist.** This not only sanctifies but in some sort deifies us, making us one with the God-Man Whom we receive: *"We become one flesh and one soul,"* says St. Chrysostom. Let us be proud of the high honor thus done us, prepare carefully for it, profit by it to the full.

POINT III.— The third union **will be in heaven, through glory,** which will unite us to God inseparably, making us like Him: *"We shall be like to Him"* (1 ST. JOHN iii. 2). Other unions may be broken, this will continue for ever: we shall possess God without fear of losing Him. Let us long for this happiness, as St. Paul did: *"Having a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ"* (PHILIP. i. 23). Let us strive to render ourselves worthy of it.

Wednesday.

ON CONTEMPT FOR THE THINGS OF THE WORLD.

POINT I.— What we can hope to possess in the world is but little: *"I have bought a farm"* (ST. LUKE xiv. 18); a portion of land, perhaps only a small portion, and yet must we purchase it, and that at a great price. How many troubles, cares and anxieties it costs us to acquire and to keep the little the world can give! We seldom succeed, and even then but for a short time, and without ever finding the repose and enjoyment we reckoned on. Is it possible for a Christian, who is to possess some day the immense and everlasting riches of heaven, to let himself be fascinated by the little he can hope for from the world?

POINT II.— We entangle ourselves imprudently in the world; accept it without knowing what it is, even as the man did who was going to try the animals he had bought for purposes of husbandry, and which he ought to have tried before he bought them: *"I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them."* If those who served the world knew the miseries, griefs, troubles, sins and want of honesty they will have to encounter in the service of such a master, never would they engage in his service. We have known all this, and we are fortunate.

Point III.—Attachment to the world puts us under a kind of **constraint to do evil** and neglect the good God requires from us for our salvation. *"I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come,"* said another of those summoned to the feast. This world occupies men so entirely, that they have neither the leisure, nor the will, nor at times the thought even, of working for God and for eternity. Let us thank God for placing us in a state of life in which this may be our sole occupation.

Thursday.

On three Torments of the Damned.

"Bind his hands and feet and cast Him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (St. Matt. xxii. 13).

Point I.—The torments of the damned are numberless, since the gospel calls hell simply a place of torments. Three among them, however, are especially brought before our notice in the gospel for this Sunday. The first consists in this, that the **damned will be bound hand and foot**; which means, that their affection for evil will be unchangeable and their will rooted in sin. Evil they hate supremely with their mind, yet detesting it with all the energy of their reason, they constantly desire it. An irrepressible impulse urges them towards good, still they abominate it vehemently. Let us try to imagine, if possible, the immensity of this torment.

Point II.— The second torment is **exterior darkness.** The damned no longer dwell in the interior darkness which was their portion in this world. On the contrary, they perceive clearly all the horrible deformity, all the foul wickedness of their heart; yet are they in exterior darkness, because they cannot, despite their frantic desire, behold the everlasting light, the only brightness that remains after death.

Point III.— The third torment is **weeping and gnashing of teeth.** These are the result of the consciousness they have of the greatness of their loss and of the violence of their torments; for the joy of the saints consists in the sight and the eternal love of God. Let us, above all else, fear the loss of our soul.

Friday.

On the Small Number of the Saved.

"*Few are chosen*" (St. Matt. xxii. 14).

Point I.— Out of the vast multitude of human beings in the world, how few, it may be, will be saved, although God made them all for heaven, and Jesus Christ died for all! **Idolatry, heresy, schism** and **impiety,** bring to ruin the greater part of mankind. Let us compassionate the mighty number of these unfortunate individuals and tremble at the thought of their ruin.

POINT II.— **Among Christians** how few, perhaps, are saved! Few reach paradise through martyrdom; very few preserve their innocence till death; very few do saving penance. How few are there who abuse not the means of salvation! They who do not are a small minority: *"Few are chosen." "Live with the few, that you may merit with the few."*

POINT III.— They who have consecrated themselves to God, have good reason for hoping to be **reckoned among the few.** Still, after all, this is uncertain. God has withdrawn them from the world in order to prevent them from perishing with the world; but they too must labor for their salvation, and that fervently: *"Strive,"* says our Blessed Lord. Let us humble ourselves under such uncertainty and continue in fear concerning our eternal lot; let us hope on and do good perseveringly: *"That by good works you may make sure your calling and election"* (2 ST. PETER i. 10).

Saturday.

WHY THE SMALLEST OF THE NUMBER OF ELECT MAKES SO LITTLE IMPRESSION.

POINT I.— Because **people are not convinced of this truth.** People interpret favorably the texts of Scripture which express it most clearly, and though they cannot hide from themselves that the behavior of mankind confirms this truth but too strongly, they place in contrast the mercy of God, as if He exercised it towards the hardened in sin, or towards false penitents. Let us not embolden ourselves by such weak pretexts, but strive to enter in by the narrow gate.

POINT II.— Because **the danger is common.** We put away fear even amid greatest dangers, when others are running the like risks, and we look on unconcerned. Had God told us that the number of the reprobate is small, and were we to see the immense majority living holy lives, we should shudder at feeling ourselves sinners. Should we then be risking more than we are now?

POINT III.— Because **each** person **flatters himself he will be an exception** and that God will withdraw him from the number of the lost, although he is leading the life they led. We should not dare believe this, still less express it; yet we readily hope it and, by dint of hoping, persuade ourselves of its truth. Let us not fall into such frightful illusion, but live even as the small number do, that we with the few may be saved.

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.

"There was a certain ruler whose son was sick" (St. John iv. 46).

Point I.— God sends illness in order to teach us that **He is Master of our health** and strength as well as of our life; He makes use of His own property, disposing of us as seemeth good to Him. We should acknowledge this supreme dominion, and submit unmurmuringly to whatever He ordains as to ourselves and our health: *"It is the Lord: let Him do what is good in His sight"* (1 Kings viii, 18).

Point II.— **By illness He manifests His justice** in punishing our faults, our ingratitude and the abuse we make of our health and strength. Let us accept this chastisement since we have deserved it; let us say to God under our castigation: *"Cut and burn in this life; but reserve not Thy chastisements for eternity"* (St. Augustine).

Point III.— **By illness He shows His** goodness and **mercy.** He makes us expiate our sins, takes from us the means of sinning, removes from us occasions of sin, detaches us from the world, draws us to Himself and causes us to practice virtue and merit glory. Had not the son of this ruler been ill, neither the father nor the son would ever have known Our Lord any more than the servants. This is what we say, or ought to say, to the sick; let us apply it to ourselves.

Monday.

HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO PROFIT BY MOMENTS OF GRACE.

"*He having heard that Jesus was come from Judæa into Galilee, went to Him*" (ST. JOHN iv. 17).

POINT I.— **Moments of grace,** when once past, **may return not.** God attaches His grace to times, places, objects and combinations of circumstances which rarely recur. If we make no use of them, we run the risk of never having them again. Had he not availed himself of the God-Man's journey through Galilee, the ruler of whom the gospel speaks would perhaps never have seen Jesus Christ. God is giving us His graces every instant. If we give ever so little heed to this, we shall notice that our days are full of these graces; yet we are poor, and we are weak. This is because we allow moments of grace to slip by unheeded.

POINT II.— Moments of grace are often **decisive for salvation.** The son of this ruler would have died, had his father not made use of the moment of Jesus Christ's passing by. Is not our continuance in lukewarmness, perhaps too in impenitence, caused by the neglect of some moments of decisive graces, powerful inspirations, violent remorse, or of seasons of jubilee, retreat, or missions?

POINT III.— When we make use of some moment of grace, **God often grants us further** graces and greater ones, which we expected not. This ruler had no thought of obtaining his own cure or that of his family from the malady of unbelief; nevertheless, Jesus Christ vouchsafed this cure in reward of charity: *"The ruler believed, and his whole house."* Let us admire this goodness of Jesus Christ, let us thank Him for having so often exercised a like goodness towards ourselves and beg Him not to allow Himself to be driven from us by our ingratitude.

Tuesday.

THE SON OF THIS RULER WAS AT THE POINT OF DEATH.

"For he was at the point of death" (ST. JOHN iv. 47).

POINT I.— In this state are we throughout our whole life. **Every day,** nay, every moment **we are near death** and may die: nothing can make us sure under the uncertainty. The true wisdom of a Christian is to live in such manner as that he need not fear an evil death and always think of himself as one who is certain to die: *"I expect until my change come"* (JOB xiv. 14).

POINT II.— Not only are we in danger of dying every moment, **but we are already dying:** *Incipiebat mori.* We begin to die from the first moment after birth. Every instant some portion of our life passes away, and so short is our life that we can say that it is but an instant, compared with eternity. Since we love life so passionately, let us love a life that will endure for ever, namely, that of heaven.

POINT III.— This ruler begged Jesus Christ **to come** to his house **before his son should die.** Such is the prayer we should each day offer to God, that by His grace He will dispose us for death, detach us from the world and from life, sanctify our soul, vouchsafe us the submission, firmness and trusting confidence we ought to have at the moment on which eternity depends.

Wednesday.

ON THREE DEFECTS IN THE FAITH OF THE RULER OF CAPHARNAUM.

" Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not " (ST. JOHN iv. 48).

POINT I.— **His faith was not firm enough.** He seemed even to think that Jesus Christ could not heal his son without going to him: *" He prayed Him to come down and heal his son."* What a different faith this was from that of the centurion, who only asked Jesus Christ to say a word that his servant might be healed! *" Only say the word "* (ST. MATT. viii. 8). Our weakness of faith is the cause of our lukewarmness, of our attachment to the world, in fact of all our sins.

POINT II.— **It was insufficiently humble.** The reproach Jesus Christ addressed to him proves this. This ruler had heard much of the miracles of Jesus, he had only to trust in them and to believe humbly. Yet he wanted to see a miracle with his own eyes. If, after all the miracles performed by Christ and His disciples, we crave for fresh ones that we may believe in Him, or if the testimony of those who have seen miracles suffices not for us, we deserve that God should give us over to our pride.

POINT III.—**It was not perfectly steadfast.** The ruler believed the words of Jesus Christ: "*Go thy way, thy son liveth.*" Yet it was only for a short time. It appears that he had no sooner left Jesus than doubts occurred to him, since he sought to know whether the hour when the fever left his son was the same in which Our Lord had told him that he was alive, and he thoroughly believed only after he was assured that such was the case. Does not our inconstancy in good proceed from our inconstancy in faith? We believe habitually, but are seldom touched by what we believe and seldom act in accordance with it. Yet, what is such barren belief worth?

Thursday.

HOW WE MUST BEHAVE UNDER GOD'S DELAYS.

"*Lord, come down before that my son die*"
(ST. JOHN iv. 49).

POINT I.—**We must remain in peace:** "*Wait on God with patience,*" says the Wise

Man (Ecclus. ii. 3). God has His reasons for delaying the grant of our requests. He wishes to prove us and increase our faith by a show of repulse. We know He has promised us help and loves us. What more do we need?

Point II.— **We must revive our confidence.** We believe that to our perseverance in prayer God has promised His help; but there would be no such thing on our part as perseverance, if there were no delay on that of God. Let us then say to Him in our troubles: O my God, because Thou dost withhold granting my requests, therefore do I hope Thou wilt grant them; the more Thou dost withdraw from me, the more eagerly will I throw myself into Thine arms.

Point III.— **We must redouble our fervor.** This is what the ruler of Capharnaum did. He did not attempt to justify himself when reproached by Jesus Christ; he seemed not even to have noticed the rebuff and contented himself with entreating Him to come to his house without delay: *"Lord, come down before that my son die."* Have we not greater reason for a more living trust in our prayers and for redoubled fervor?

Friday.

ON OUR RULING PASSION.

"The fever left him" (ST. JOHN iv. 52).

POINT I.— **Our fever means our ruling passion**, the principal vice holding sway over us, the headspring of our faults and sins, the great hindrance to our perfection and salvation and, should we lose our souls, the cause of our eternal ruin. This fever leaves us only with life and will ever be the constant cause of our fears and struggles. We must, without ever relaxing our efforts, fight this household enemy, hence must hate ourselves, because our enemy is a part of ourselves. This it is which takes heaven by storm. *"The violent bear it away"* (ST. MATT. xi. 12).

POINT II.— **It is necessary to know** our chief enemy, **our master passion,** in order to humble ourselves, keep on our guard and conquer it by flight or by resistance. It is still more necessary to have the will to get rid of it, or at least to resist it. In this let us follow the advice given by Saint Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises.* Let us consider the deformity of this vice, as well in ourselves as in others; let us think what we would say to any one else subject to the same passion. Let us ponder what God requires from us on this score, what we would wish to have done at the hour of death, on the judgment-day and throughout eternity.

POINT III.— The **remedies** are distrust of ourselves, watchfulness against our enemy, prayer, the presence of God and the frequenting of the Sacraments. Our Blessed Savior will, by His personal presence, calm our passions, even as He stilled the tempests; He will cure us of our vices, as He cured the fever.

Saturday.

"Himself believed, and his whole house"
(St. John iv. 53).

Point I.—When God wishes to pour out His graces on some family, parish, diocese, or kingdom, He **confers them** as a rule **on those in authority.** Thus, it is not said of Zaccheus alone that he obtained salvation through the visit paid him by Jesus Christ, but that salvation came to his whole house. *"This day is salvation come to this house"* (St. Luke xix. 9). Happy then are those Communities whose rulers are beloved of God! This is a strong reason why subjects should pray for their superiors.

Point II.—**Superiors** should not only **endeavor** by their **discourse,** but further by their **example,** to establish the reign of faith in those under their obedience. We can well believe that the officer of Capharnaum related at home all he had seen and heard of Jesus and that he exhorted his whole household to acknowledge Christ as the Messias; but what would his exhortation have availed had he not been himself the first to profess his faith? He believed, and they imitated his example. *"Himself believed and his whole house."* To set a good example is therefore one of the first duties of a superior.

POINT III.— **Superiors should use their authority** to make the fear of God paramount in the houses subject to their rule, for God will call them to account for all the harm they might have prevented. They need, it is true, to use discretion and prudence; but we must not confound these virtues with indifference and with want of energy and courage.

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

"A king . . . would take an account of his servants" (ST. MATT. xviii. 23).

POINT I.— When God bestows on us His gifts and His graces, **He does not mean them to be wasted**; we are bound to improve them and shall have to account to Him for them. He will punish severely not those only who have misused his benefits, but those also who have neglected to turn them to account. We should fear this strict scrutiny and attendant severe punishment. They will take place at death, when there will be no longer time to repair our evil doings.

POINT II.— One of the king's ministers **owed him ten thousand talents.** This dignitary is a type of each one of us. How much do we not owe to God's goodness for the gifts He has bestowed on us; to His justice for the sins which we have committed; to His patience for the delay which has been granted us? These are so many motives for contrition as well as for gratitude.

Point III.— Such mode of acting towards us on God's part should make us **accept with submission all the reverses which happen to us.** As we have received so many good things from the hand of God, ought we to complain if some adversity get mixed with them? Since we have deserved everlasting misery, can we complain of misfortunes which are merely temporary? Never should we murmur at anything, were we to keep these thoughts in our mind and these sentiments in our heart.

Monday.

"*The lord of that servant being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him the debt*" (St. Matt. xviii. 27).

Point I.— Let us consider **God's conduct towards those who offend Him.** In all places, at all times and by all kinds of persons, is He offended in every possible way; yet is not angered, does not revenge Himself, though possessing manifold means of ruining those who sin against Him. He bears with them, cherishes them, loads them with blessings. Let us marvel at such patience, mercy and goodness in our

God; let us bless Him for His perfections and profit by His kindness to us.

Point II.— What **God has done for me** should strike me with even greater wonder. He bore with me when I treated Him unworthily, did not punish me, has not ceased to lavish benefits on me. He has waited for me patiently, has begged afresh for my friendship and has given me back His own. Are not these motives powerful enough to move my contrition, love and gratitude?

Point III.— What God has done in our regard should teach us **what we ought to do towards others**; and yet we are exceedingly sensitive about the least harm done us, or which we imagine that others have wished to do to us; we are impatient, passionate, vindictive, cruel and implacable about things which are absolutely of no weight, or at least of very small importance. Ought we not to fear that God will say to us what was said to this wicked vassal: *"Shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee?"* (St. Matt. xviii. 33).

Tuesday.

On four great Ills which overwhelm the Sinner whom God punishes in His Wrath.

Point I.— **God takes from the sinner all that he possesses.** The king in the gospel ordered all belonging to this unmerciful dependent to be sold. God takes from a sinner all endowment of fortune, of grace and glory, of nature even, with the exception of the life which enables him to suffer. What a depth of misery!

Point II.— **God casts the sinner into the horrible darkness of hell:** *"Into the exterior darkness"* (St. Matt. xxii. 13). In this fiery prison the sinner will burn in flame which gives out no light and will suffer terror without any respite. A devil shuddered with horror when our Blessed Savior was about to compel him to return to the abyss. What then will be the lot of the sinner?

Point III.— **God will deliver him into the hands of the executioners** of His justice: *"This Lord . . . delivered him to the torturers"* (St. Matt. xviii. 34). The devils, those cruel executioners, will employ all their skill, strength and rage to torment him.

Point IV.— **All this too will last for ever!** The hands and feet of the wretched sinner will be bound; he will be unable to perform one single action, or to move one single step, to put an end to his misery; in this prison he will remain and undergo these torments as long as he is a debtor to God's justice, that is, for all eternity. Let us live in dread of this rigorous justice; let us fear sin, which may cause us to experience results so awful.

Wednesday.

"A king . . . would take an account of his servants" (St. Matt. xviii. 23).

Point I.— When we see the recklessness of men about their conduct; the liberty they allow themselves in thinking, speaking and acting as they like; the use they make of their mind, their body, time and of the gifts which God has bestowed, we would never imagine that **they will have to render an account** for all this to God at the judgment. If I believe this terrible truth, am I thoroughly impressed by it? Am I not living as thoughtlessly as if I had not to render any account?

Point II.— Before the day of judgment, however, **God makes us give an account of our conduct even now,** during life, by the remorse of conscience which He causes us to feel from time to time in moments of grace, when we frequent the Sacraments, in prayer, in times of retreat and recollection, or in seasons of affliction. Let us accept these graces gratefully and employ them earnestly: nothing is more perilous than to make bad use of them.

Point III.— **This judgment is certain:** nothing can save us from it; but the time is uncertain; perhaps our last hour is close at hand. Only a good use of the graces and gifts of Our Lord can render the judgment favorable to us. Is our account ready? God knows our dispositions; let us try to become acquainted with His own concerning us; and to ascertain what He is preparing to do in our regard. Conscience will tell us this; let us give ear to it and make sacrifice of everything with which it reproaches us.

Thursday.

"*As he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made*" (St. Matt. xviii. 25).

Point I.— **No sinner would be able to satisfy God's justice,** were God to treat him **without mercy.** He waits for sinners, to give them room for repentance; but not for ever does He wait; often, indeed, after having waited a long time in vain, He calls upon us for payment of our account, although there be nothing wherewith to discharge it. During the course of my life I have frequently been in such condition: what would have become of me then, O my God, hadst Thou called upon me to settle my account?

Point II.— The multitude of sins which I have committed, the numerous gifts of God which I have so abused as to turn them to my loss and the many graces not profited by afford me reason to believe **I should be lost** were **I** to die **without doing penance**; and if I delay doing so, perhaps I shall never do it: I must then resolve quickly. Why should I continue to the end putting it off? So little did I resist in giving myself up to the world which has all but ruined me, that I should not hesitate to give myself now to God, Who desires to make me happy for ever.

POINT III.— The servant asked for time in order to pay, and **his lord had pity upon him:** *"The lord . . . being moved with pity, let him go."* God has behaved in like manner towards me. He has spared me until now, and has given me time to make good my faults, and to strive hard to change my life; but I have thwarted His expectations, and abused all this time so as to increase my indebtedness. What punishment would be too severe for me, were I to continue being unfaithful to Him?

Friday.

"That servant falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all" (ST. MATT. xviii. 26).

POINT I.— Jesus Christ in these words teaches us what are the means which we, in our poverty and insufficiency, should use to satisfy His justice. First, **we should humble ourselves sincerely before God**, as did this servant, prostrate at the feet of his lord: *"That servant falling down."* God will will never cast off any one who is penetrated with a sense of his nothingness, sins and unworthiness, and who is truly humbled in sight of the Divine Majesty.

Point II.— A second means of finding favor with God, is **to pray to Him fervently**: *"Besought Him."* Our good God has mercy upon all those who implore Him, as they ought, to show it.

Point III.— The third means is **confidence in the goodness of God**: *"Saying, Have patience with me."* We cannot hope too much from God's goodness, if we, on our side, are anxious to do all in our power to render ourselves worthy of it.

Point IV.— The fourth means is a sincere **will to satisfy, by penance, the justice of God,** for all that we owe Him: *"And I will pay thee all."* It is not presumption to promise this, if we rely not upon ourselves, but on the mercy of God and the merits of Jesus Christ, which are infinite and which it only rests with us to make our own.

Saturday.

"So also shall My heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts" (St. Matt. xviii. 35).

Point I.— **There is no forgiveness for him who refuses to forgive**; but if you forgive others, God will forgive you. Would you not be truly happy to obtain pardon for so many sins at such a price? You realize not what you deserve, if you are sensitive about an offense, yet refuse to forgive. You insult Our Lord by asking Him for a forgiveness which you withhold from an equal; you renounce Jesus Christ, Who has given you an example, and Who asks you to show mercy to your enemy; you irritate your Judge, Who will do to you as you do to others. *"So also shall He do to you."* Meditate very seriously on all these considerations.

Point II.—It is **your brother whom God commands you to forgive:** *"His brother:"* a Christian like yourself, a man worth fully as much as yourself in God's sight, perhaps even more; who is the image of God, the child of God and under the protection of God. Will you dare to refuse to your fellow-creature what God refuses not to you—to you who are but a miserable wretch in His eyes?

Point III.—We must forgive **with our whole heart, and not in appearance only:** *"From your hearts."* Involuntary dislike is not sin; encourage it not, stifle your resentment, banish the thought of the injury done you; think, on the contrary, of what you deserve, of the example of Jesus Christ and of the promises God has made you. You would forgive at the pressing appeal of some dear friend asking pardon for your enemy. How can you dare to refuse such forgiveness when it is God Himself Who commands you to grant it and when Jesus Christ implores you to bestow it?

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

"Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker" (St. Matt. xxii. 16).

Point I.— The Pharisees, with certain leaders in King Herod's court, undertook to entangle our Blessed Lord in a complicated case of conscience and, with a view to taking Him by surprise, **had recourse to flattery** and artful compliments. This may teach us that flatterers are to be shunned and that it is vile and unprincipled to like to be flattered.

Point II.— Without wishing to do so, these flatterers **reveal to us the excellent qualities of Jesus** Christ, the foremost of masters. They show us that He is essential truth and that He teaches us the way to heaven with admirable zeal, without worldly purpose, without human respect. After having thanked Him for having called us to be His disciples, let us beg His forgiveness for having learnt so imperfectly the lessons He has sought to teach us.

Point III.— Since our Divine Master wishes us also to have the high privilege of instructing others in the way of salvation, **let us display the like qualities** we admire in Him: ardent zeal for the truth; trustworthiness in speech, conforming it to truth and uprightness: inviolable candor in pointing out to men the path which leads to God; outspoken daring in rebuking vice; courage in eschewing all human respect. Let us examine in how far we are wanting in this matter.

Monday.

WE ARE THE IMAGE OF GOD.

"*Whose image . . . is this?*" (ST. MATT. xxii. 20).

POINT I.— **In our creation our soul was made the image of God.** It resembled God in its three powers, but still more in its moral goodness, in its inclination towards good and aversion from evil and in the uprightness of mind and heart which man preserved so long as his innocence lasted. God created us in His image to teach us that we are precious in His sight. Let us then grieve over the disaster which has deprived us of so blessed a condition.

POINT II.— Through the sin of our first parents, **we lost the precious privilege which made us resemble God,** and in its stead we put on the image of the old man: our mind rendered obstinate through pride; our will, once averse from evil, inclined to it as strongly as it is opposed to good; our heart cruel, selfish, sensual: such are the features of this hideous portraiture, while our own personal sins have made it still more repulsive. Let us then hate sin which has disfigured us so shamefully.

POINT III.— Through the grace of belonging to the Catholic Church, **we are the images of Jesus Christ**; hence must we like Him in gentleness, modesty, humility, innocence and charity. We must strive to perfect and embellish the resemblance until it attains its highest perfection in heaven: *"We shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is"* (1 St. John iii. 2). Let us then strain every effort to bring about this similarity: everything binds us so to do, even the appellation we bear, which is our name of Christian. Let us say with St. Augustine: *"Thou hast the title-deeds of Christ, be not the property of the world."*

Tuesday.

On the Duties of a Christian.

"Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and to God the things that are God's" (St. Matt. xxii. 21).

Point I.— All that we are belongs to God: **He created us for Himself,** and He preserves us for the same end. Our memory, understanding, will, our powers, all are meant to remind us of Him, to know Him, love Him and work for Him. To refuse these to Him were an injustice, to employ them against Him a crime.

Point II.— **All creatures were created for my sake**: some solely for my sake; some for me as well as for others. God would have me use them as means of going to Him. If I make such use of them, and if by my devout purpose I refer them to Him, I pay what I owe Him; otherwise, I do but abuse His gifts.

Point III.— We owe respect and **obedience to our superiors**; deference, friendship, and service to our equals, and protection and kindly offices to those of more humble position. If we fulfill these duties, giving to each what is due, we fulfill God's commands and do all for God. He will reward us if we act thus for His sake; else we shall run the risk of losing our time and trouble.

Wednesday.

"Why do you tempt Me, ye hypocrites?"
(St. Matt. xxii. 18).

Point I.— **We can please God only by sincere piety,** and not by hypocritical and pretended religion. The frequent reproaches Jesus Christ addressed to the Pharisees and the anathemas He pronounced against them on account of their hypocrisy make clear what a horror He had of this vice. We do good works, we are modest in our outward behavior; but if we are seekers of our own interests in doing this, of our own rather than God's glory, we become objects of execration in His sight: *"Woe to you . . . hypocrites"* (St. Matt. xxiii. 13).

Point II.— **Hypocrisy works havoc in religion.** You may be in your conduct to all appearance devout and regular; yet if you neglect your business and the wise control of your family; if you are hard upon your servants, stingy towards the poor, without charity or gentleness towards your neighbor, without submission to your superiors, you are simply a hypocrite. Libertines infer from your example that all devout persons are of the same stamp, and from this take occasion to turn piety and good people into ridicule. If Jesus Christ curses those who lead others into sin, what must they fear who encourage them to remain in their wickedness?

POINT III.— **The hypocrite injures himself;** he might merit heaven by his good works, but he contents himself with the esteem of men. This is the only recompense he will ever receive. Indeed, his hypocrisy will probably some time or other become known and will cause him to be despised by all. Still, even were he to deceive every one else, he could not deceive God, Who knows the whole disorder of his heart, Who alone will be his judge and Who will reject all works not done for His sake: *"Woe be to us, unhappy men, who have inherited the vices of the Pharisees!"*

Thursday.

"Whose image . . . is this?" (ST. MATT. xxii. 20).

POINT I.— **Man is the image of God,** because he is endowed with a soul which is spiritual, immortal, intelligent, free, capable of knowledge, virtue, grace, happiness and of all sorts of blessings; and he is required, moreover, to be by his conduct the image of Jesus Christ. Humility, patience, mortification, penance, piety and charity — these are the several features characterizing such image. Let us set good store by our happy lot and never disgrace our dignity.

POINT II.— A man who makes it his sole intent to satisfy his senses in pleasures of the body, who spends his time in voluptuousness, idleness and luxury, is he **living as a brute, or as a human being** — like an Epicurean, or a Christian? "*Whose image . . . is this?*"

POINT III.— An ambitious man, who longs after earthly glory, who studies only to justify his wrongdoing, push himself forward and rise above others; does he resemble Jesus Christ, or does he not rather become likened to the devil, **whose pride hurled him down to hell?** "*Whose image . . . is this?*" Which of these several portraitures is mine? Likeness to Jesus Christ can alone merit for us God's friendship and kingdom. "*For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son*" (ROM. viii. 29).

Friday.

"*Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*" (ST. MATT. xxii. 21).

POINT I.— Few there are who **have not wronged their neighbor** in one way or the other; through negligence, malice, affront, theft, usurpation, unfair advantage, cheating, unjust compensation, debts incurred without means of payment, or payments deferred either unduly, or only made under pressure. We are bound when able to make restitution to those we have wronged. Shallow pretexts can never dispense us from doing so.

Point II.— We must likewise make good the injury we have done **by words** of ours **to our neighbor's** reputation. *Reddite.* How can this be effected when the matter has become public? Will you be able to stay and extinguish the blazing fire? Should you retract what you have said, will you be believed? If too you give praise to those whom you have unjustly slandered, the good you say of them will ever gain less credence than the evil you have spread broadcast. What great cause for fear have indiscreet tongues! What a powerful motive is not this to make us cautious in our words!

Point III.— The greatest injury, however, we can do our neighbor, and the one most difficult perhaps to repair, is that which we do to the souls of **our brethren through scandal.** We neglect to correct and to reprove when we ought to do so; and cause scandal by our ill-regulated conduct, by bad counsel, bad example, improper books, disedifying fashions, immodest dress, licentious speech. Such scandals are but too common, and due reparation is very rarely made; yet so far as possible it must be made, alike for God's glory, as for the good of souls. We should often entreat God sorrowfully, as did the

Prophet-King, to forgive us all the scandals we have caused: *"From the sins of others spare Thy servant"* (Ps. xviii. 13).

Saturday.

ON THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN TOWARDS GOD.

POINT I.—Jesus Christ is **the way** whereby we are to reach heaven: *Ego sum via* (ST. JOHN xiv. 6). If we follow in His steps and imitate His virtues, we are sure to reach heaven; but if we follow Him not, we are equally sure to go astray and lose ourselves. O my dear Lord, Thou didst become Man in order to be my model and my guide: I desire to follow Thee to Calvary, and whithersoever Thou mayest wish to lead me: *"I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go"* (ST. MATT. viii. 9).

POINT II.—Jesus Christ is **the truth** itself: *Ego sum veritas.* He said: *"Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation;" "Blessed are the poor;" "Blessed are ye who weep and who suffer."* Do you believe this? Are you living as though you believed it? *"I do believe, Lord: help my unbelief"* (ST. MARK ix. 23).

POINT III.—Jesus is **the life** of Christians: *Ego sum vita.* He came down from heaven upon earth to merit for them everlasting life and to procure for them a happy life even in this world, through abundance of all kinds of blessings: *"Made rich in Him in all things"* (I COR. i. 5). Not by the perishable riches of the earth, but by the riches of grace, that is, the virtues which make us live with the life of Jesus Christ, lead a holy life, and conduct us to a life of glory in eternity. We labor so much for this wretched life which must come to an end; how much then ought we to do to reach that eternal life which Jesus Christ promises to those who are faithful to Him. *"Seek ye God, and your soul shall live"* (PSALM lxviii. 23).

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE DEATH OF THE JUST.

"The girl is not dead, but sleepeth"
(ST. MATT. ix. 24).

POINT I.—Our Lord calls the death of the **innocent** who are His friends, **a sleep, not a death:** *"Lazarus our friend sleepeth"* (ST. JOHN xi. 11), said Jesus. Peace of conscience, the remembrance of acts of virtue, interior grace, hope, the desire to see God in heaven—these fill them with joy. They die in the arms of Providence. O happy sleep! *"In peace in the self-same, I will sleep and I will rest"* (PSALM iv. 9). Let us strive to merit this.

POINT II.—Such a death is also a sleep, because our Blessed Lord will **awake the dead at the Resurrection,** dispelling the darkness of the tomb, and will cause them to begin the long and blissful day of eternity. It was the hope of a blessed resurrection that comforted Job and the holy King David when at the point of death. From such-like hope the martyrs, confessors and all the just derived their strength and joy under tortures, amid the rigors of their penance and when laboring for the good of the Church. Let us take courage from the like hope.

POINT III.— If the **death** of those who are dear to God **be sudden,** it is nothing but a **more pleasant sleep** which God sometimes sends to His faithful servants. They are thus exempt from the tediousness of long illness, the fear of their approaching end, the horrors of the death-agony, and they find themselves forthwith in possession, or, at least, in certain expectation of eternal happiness. What a delight! We must not fear a sudden, but an unprovided death, and this latter is to be feared by reason of its consequences.

Monday.

WE SHOULD HAVE RECOURSE TO OUR LORD.

POINT I.— The grief felt by the father and the other relatives of this young girl, their intense emotion, the crowd which filled the room, the mourners and the players on instruments were all of no avail to her; **no one but Jesus gave her any efficient help.** This teaches us that in our grievous necessities we should have recourse to God, since all other aid is vain; that friends, relations and patrons are powerless or indisposed to help us.

Point II.— To strengthen our confidence in Our Lord, we should ponder that He feels for our troubles: He was grieved by the sorrow of the father and the death of the girl; He is powerful to help us, He is disinterested, having no object but to do us good. Jesus would not have any witnesses of the favor He was going to bestow on the family; He ordered the mourners to leave the room, and far from exaggerating the benefit, He lessened it: *"The girl is not dead but sleepeth;"* as if what He was about to do were merely to awaken a girl who was sleeping. On the other hand, the friends we have in the world do little good to any of us, and of that little good are continually reminding us. *"He will give a few things and will upbraid much,"* says the Holy Spirit (Ecclus. xx. 15).

Point III.— When the people had left the room, Our Lord entered it, to teach us that, if we would experience personally the results of our confidence and of His protection, we must renounce the vain trust which we repose in creatures. Jesus alone can help us; in Him alone ought we to hope.

Tuesday.

ON HABITUAL SIN.

"There was a certain woman having an issue of blood twelve years" (ST. LUKE viii. 43).

POINT I.— This woman, suffering for so many years from a humiliating disease, is a type of **one grovelling in vicious habits.** We have remained not twelve years only, but a much longer time, in languor, victims of dangerous maladies, and not healed, because we wish not to be made sound. We have a liking for our infirmity: we ought to be afraid lest it become incurable: *Morbus inveteratus artem superat et curationem.*

POINT II.— The woman touched only **the hem of Our Savior's** sacred **garment, and** she **was healed.** We possess a remedy more powerful, namely, Our Savior in person, Who gives Himself to us in the Blessed Eucharist. There is no inclination so strong, no habit so engrained, no evil so inveterate that our Divine Master cannot cure, if we have recourse to Him with confidence.

POINT III.— **Whence comes it that we who approach Our Savior so often are not healed?** It is because we do not go to Him anxious to be healed and with the disposition of heart and mind Jesus requires. We should fear the evil which ensues from fruitless communions: *"Woe be to us who daily touch the Body of Christ and are not cured of our wounds."*

Wednesday.

"My daughter is even now dead"
(St. Matt. ix. 18).

Point I.—**Neither high birth, riches, nor youth can save us from** the grasp of **death.** This only daughter of a ruler of the synagogue, carried off in the bloom of her youth, is a striking lesson of the continual danger we are in of dying and of the care we should take to keep our conscience in a good state. We believe this truth, and are now and again even impressed by it; yet lukewarmness, sin and worldliness have ascendency in our heart. Will death, which threatens us unceasingly, never teach us how to live?

Point II.—Every one was mourning the fate of this maiden. **Jesus Christ told them not to weep.** The only death which should really be deplored is that of those once just when they become dead to grace, or that of sinners who die an eternal death in sin. Why should we weep for the death of those who die in the grace of God? Their death is only a happy sleep, which introduces them into the abode of glory and immortality: *"The girl is not dead but sleepeth."*

Point III.—**The saints wish for death;** the good fear it not; sinners dread it, or if they do not, the reason is to be found in their hardness of heart. How is it with us? Let us become what we ought to be; death will then be less terrible to us.

Thursday.

"They laughed Him to scorn"
(St. Matt. ix. 24).

Point I.— Those who were present laughed at Jesus Christ when He said that the girl was not dead but sleeping, because they **understood not** the import of **His words.** In the same way libertines in our own day scoff at the maxims of the gospel without understanding them: in the absence of valid reasons for condemning such maxims, the most stupid taunts appear to them sufficient to scatter to the winds the most solid truths of religion. Let us always reverence religion and pity those who jeer at it.

Point II.— **Few kinds of raillery are innocent.** It generally proceeds from a mind trivial, superficial, envious, satirical, uncharitable, full of self-esteem and of contempt of others. Let us correct ourselves if we have these vices and look upon them as unworthy of a Christian: *"Let not foolish talking, or scurrility, be named amongst you"* (Eph. v. 3, 4).

Point III.— **Raillery envenoms our own heart,** and often wounds that of others. It generally provokes resentment, at times even aversion, enmities, quarrels and dissensions. No one likes to be turned into ridicule: *"What man is there like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water?"* (Job. xxxiv. 7.) If we esteem charity at its true worth, we shall never amuse ourselves at its expense.

Friday.

ON THE DEATH OF THE JUST.

POINT I.— Three things render holy and peaceful the death of the just. The first is **the number of virtuous actions they have performed** during their life, the penances and the alms whereby they have sought to expiate their sins. These are the lamps we should hold in our hands while waiting for the Bridegroom: *"Lamps burning in your hands"* (ST. LUKE xii. 35). *"Let your good works shine before men"* (ST. MATT. v. 16). Let us do good while we have time, and we shall die a good death.

POINT II.— The second thing which renders their death holy, is **the habit of virtue which they have contracted.** They have lived in the exercise of faith, hope, charity and true devotion to Jesus and Mary; these religious practices were familiar to them and have become easy in death. Having such habits of piety, they cannot die otherwise than holily. Let us then form pious habits: they will influence us and comfort us in death.

POINT III.— The third cause of their holy death is **God's Providence.** They surrendered themselves to Him in life, and He will have care of them at the hour of death. Should they be deprived of all human help, He will comfort them in death as in life: they will die peacefully in the arms of Him in Whom they have ever trusted. Let us confide in His loving Providence in all things. It will take care of us in life alike and in death: *"Hope in God, and mercy shall come to you for your delight"* (Ecclus. ii. 9).

Saturday.

"If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed" (St. Matt. ix. 21).

Point I.—Jesus Christ, in healing the woman who had been ill for twelve years, teaches the efficacy of prayer and by her example **shows us how we ought to pray.** He praises and rewards her faith: *"Thy faith hath made thee whole"* (St. Matt. ix. 22). She asks neither to touch Our Lord, nor that He may touch her: she craves no single word from Him, no smallest portion of His garments, in order to bring about her cure. She believes that this will be assured if only she can have the good fortune to touch the hem of His cloak: *"If I shall touch only His garment"* (St. Matt. ix. 21). Let us ask God for such living faith, to Him so pleasing, to ourselves so advantageous.

Point II.—Again, **the humility of this woman** is an example for us. She is ashamed of her state, she does not dare to appear before Jesus Christ, she conceals herself so as to be able to get near Him, she *"came behind Him"* (St. Matt. ix. 20). She presumes not to ask Him to heal her: *"She said within herself"*

(St. Matt. ix. 21); scarcely does she dare to mingle with the crowd, that she may secretly touch the hem of Our Savior's garment: *"And touched the hem of His garment."* But it is precisely because she does not dare to present herself before Jesus, nor to speak to Him, that He turns towards her and honors her with His sympathy. My God, teach me to know and to humble myself, that I may learn how to ask Thee for what I need.

Point III.—Although this woman is deeply impressed with her unworthiness, **she does not lose confidence in God**; she is persuaded that Jesus will not reject her, she looks for everything from His power and His goodness; her confidence is so great that she has no doubt of her cure if she can but get near enough to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. *"If I shall touch . . . I shall be healed."* Humility without confidence is profitless, and confidence without humility is vain and presumptuous; but confidence together with humility can obtain all from God. If my prayers are fruitless, it is because I know not how to pray. What a disgrace to me!

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

"*When therefore you shall see the abomination of desolation . . . standing in the holy place*" (St. Matt. xxiv. 15).

Point I.— This abomination, accompanied by complete desolation, **is the profanation of the temple** in Jerusalem and the ruin of the Jewish nation. They deserved this punishment because of their contempt of God's graces and their grievous crimes; God has now forsaken them, and the holiest and most favored of peoples has become the most wretched and the most despised. We should fear lest God forsake us on account of our sins and our contempt of His graces.

Point II.— The abomination in the holy place is **the guilty life of Christians**, who, in the Church, amidst holy things and with many manifold means of salvation and sanctification, profane their baptism, and, by their disorders, dishonor religion. Let us wonder at the patience of God, Who bears with all their sins; let us, so far as we can, prevent these disorders.

Point III.— The abomination in the holy place is **the imperfect life of a Religious** in his state of life. Everything in it is holy; God has placed there countless aids to holiness, yet not seldom Religious are not saintly. Let us fear those terrible words: "*In the land of the saints he hath done wicked things, he shall not see the glory of the Lord*" (Is. xxvi. 10). He who leads a guilty life in a house of holiness inhabited by saints, will be barred from the glory God is preparing for His saints.

Monday.

ON VENIAL SIN.

POINT I.— Venial sin destroys not the life of the soul, but it is **a stain soiling and disfiguring** it. It is a malady that causes the soul to languish, to be void of all relish for the things of God and without any devotion. It encumbers the soul and prevents it from advancing in holiness and rising heavenward. Let us ponder the many venial sins we commit every day, in thought, word, deed and by omission: if their grievousness alarm us not, their countless number should frighten us.

POINT II.— Venial sin **makes our love for God grow cold** and chills God's love towards us. It robs us of many actual graces, and may be a stepping-stone to mortal sin. It causes much evil in this life, and must be punished in the fire of purgatory, which some have believed to be like that of hell, though without being everlasting. Let us try to realize to ourselves that venial sin is a very serious evil; let us dread the stern justice of a God so often offended.

POINT III.— **Venial sin is an insult to God,** since it offends Him; therefore all the ills of this life and of the next are as nothing in comparison to it. Were all creatures to be annihilated, it would be a less evil. Could we commit it, if we loved God ever so little? Let us be ashamed that we do commit it so frequently.

Tuesday.

WHY WE ARE SO LITTLE TOUCHED BY THE ETERNAL TRUTHS.

"He that readeth, let him understand"
(ST. MATT. xxiv. 15).

POINT I.—It proceeds from **the weakness of our faith**; we hear the gospel explained, we read, we reflect on the things of eternity, yet we are not touched, we seem to be devoid of feeling about them, we go on just the same. This is because our faith is languid; we have hardly any. The prophets, the Apostles and the solitaries in their deserts, shuddered with horror at the mere thought of God's judgments, or of an eternity of misery. This was because they possessed a lively faith in these great truths. We have the like reason for believing as they: let us revive our faith.

POINT II.—It proceeds from **the prejudices which fill our mind** and heart. We love the world, its riches and pleasures. Our passions and our surroundings deceive us, the turmoil of creatures and the troubles of life, allow us not to consider the great truths of religion; scarcely do we spend a few moments in giving thought to what is to follow upon death. We ought to keep our passions in check, abstain from useless pursuits and withdraw from time to time from the hubbub of the world, in order to think of the eternal years.

POINT III.— It proceeds from **our negligence in profiting by what God makes known to us.** Sometimes we are penetrated with the fear of God and with a keen desire for salvation. This is an effect of God's grace; but we are no better for it, and God, in punishment, withdraws His light from our mind.

Wednesday.

"*There shall arise false Christs and false prophets*" (ST. MATT. xxiv. 24).

POINT I.— The **world will never be wanting in false teachers**, who, guided by a spirit of pride and lust, will seek to seduce the elect by their blasphemies against God and against the teaching and Church of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, God, Who protects His own people, will find means of enabling us to triumph over the troubles, scandals and persecutions encountered by religion, if we humble ourselves before Him, so as to merit His protection, and mourn over our sins, which God punishes by such visitations.

POINT II.—The sight of **the scandals which afflict the Church** should lead us to pray much; the greater they are, the more numerous and fervent should our prayers be. Do we deserve to be looked upon as children of the Church, if we have no share in the sorrows that afflict it?

POINT III.— **We must keep watch over ourselves** to guard against being led away; must distrust curiosity, fear novelty and listen attentively to the voice of the Church Jesus Christ has given us as our guide: whoever teaches under any other form of words, is a seducer. Jesus Christ warns us of this: "*Behold I have foretold to you*" (ST. MATT. xiii. 23). After this caution we are no longer excusable if we allow ourselves to be led astray.

Thursday.

"*They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty*" (ST. MATT. xxiv. 30).

POINT I.— How great is the difference between Jesus Christ born in a stable, poor, rejected, dying upon a cross, insulted by every one and Jesus Christ at the judgment, clothed with power and glory, accompanied by His heavenly court, seated amid dazzling clouds, seeing all mankind prostrate at His feet, awaiting the sentence which is to decide the fate of each one for all eternity! **We cannot hope to share His glory if we refuse to share His humiliations**: "*If we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him*" (ROM. viii. 17).

Point II,—*"Then shall appear the sign of the son of Man"* (St. Matt. xxiv. 30). **The Cross will then appear brighter than the sun,** for the glory of Jesus Christ and of His true disciples, as also for the confusion of those who refused to pay homage to it and to take it for their rule of conduct. Let us reverence the Cross, and courageously bear it with Jesus Christ, if we would not be utterly rejected in the terrible day of God's vengeance.

Point III.—*"Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn"* (St. Matt. xxiv. 30). All nations shall mourn: **unbelievers,** who through their own fault have never known their Savior; **scoffers,** who will be accursed because they refused to believe His words; **sinners,** who will be in consternation because they acted not up to His teaching, nor followed His example. Certain am I to be of the number of those miserable wretches, if I believe not His words and prefer the maxims of the world to those of Jesus Christ.

Friday.

"He shall send His angels . . . and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds" (St. Matt. xxiv. 31).

Point I.—**On earth the good are mingled with the bad;** they hold the like tenets, live under like conditions; their heart alone distinguishes them in God's sight, sometimes, too, their sufferings in the eyes of men; because the good are the object of the contempt, hatred and persecutions of the wicked; and yet the wicked enjoy not their triumph long. If we serve God, we may comfort ourselves in the thought that God knows and protects His own: "*The Lord knoweth His own;*" and by the recollection of the eternal promises Jesus Christ has made to His suffering members: "*Looking for the blessed hope*" (TITUS ii. 13).

POINT II.—At the day of judgment, the angels will bring **into the presence of Jesus Christ** all the elect to adorn His triumph, and all the lost will be dragged before Him to hear their condemnation. O ye just ones, who now are despised and walk with your heads bowed down under weight of your humiliation, you will then raise up your heads, whilst sinners, in consternation, terror and despair, will not dare to uplift their eyes. Whilst the wicked are panic-stricken, you, in the assembly of the saints, will be laden with consolation and glory. This sacred gathering, this venerable senate of the elect, will judge the prosperous, the mighty, the rulers even of the earth. O ineffable glory of God's elect! Why art thou not the sole object of our ambition? How light are the afflictions of this life, how trifling is the glory of the world, when we consider the everlasting glory which God reserves for His faithful servants! "*If you partake of the suffering of Christ, re-*

joice that when His glory shall be revealed, you also may be glad with exceeding joy" (1 St. Peter iv. 13).

Saturday.

"*Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill"* (St. Matt. v. 6.)

Point I.— Such hunger and thirst are **an earnest desire** to give to God and to our neighbor their full due, to progress continually in holiness, which is the true righteousness, and go forward to enjoy the reward promised by God, namely, the possession of Himself. Let us examine into our own hearts, both as regards our present virtue and our future possession of God.

Point II.— They who have this strong desire are blessed, because **God will grant them whatever they wish.** They will attain to a high degree of holiness; their thirst will be quenched by God Himself, the source of true joy, and even in this life will they experience a sweetness which the lukewarm can never know.

Point III.— **Our Savior's example** is admirable in this as in all else. He desired this justice so much, that He denied His body the necessary food. He longed for His Death and Passion in order to fulfill His Father's will; even in dying He felt this thirst. If we loved Him, we, too, should have the like ardent desire to sanctify ourselves, and He would satisfy it. The Blessed Virgin assures us of this: "*He hath filled the hungry with good things*" (St. Luke i. 53).

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

On the Love of our Neighbor.

"*All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them*" (St. Matt. vii. 12).

Point I.— In order to do to others what we would have them do to us, and thus fulfill Christ's precept, we must first **hold them in good esteem.** We wish others to have a good opinion of us, and even carry our pretensions too far on this score. Let us at least be reasonable towards others. Let us excuse them as regards their intention, even if their actions are manifestly bad; when we cannot excuse them on the ground of their intention, let us then excuse them by reason of their weakness; if we cannot excuse them in any manner, let us leave them to the judgment of God. We would have others behave in such wise towards us; let us not have two measures.

Point II.— **We should wish them all good,** as much as we ought reasonably to wish it for ourselves, and that with our heart and not with our lips only. To do this, we should silence our self-love, pride and envy and should emamine carefully whether these passions are not extinguishing in our hearts the fire of charity.

POINT III.— **We must do them good** whenever we are able and even when we have reason to feel dissatisfied with others for not doing the same to us. Charity which shows not itself by works is nothing more than an illusion of mind and heart, so many are the opportunities offered for the exercise of spiritual or corporal charity.

Monday.

THAT LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR HAS ALWAYS BEEN COMMANDED.

"For this is the law and the prophets"
(ST. MATT. vii. 12).

POINT I.— **Under the law of nature.** This commandment was engraved on the heart of man, and Cain had no sooner violated it than remorse took possession of his soul. In spite of the power of self-love, we feel an inward satisfaction when we have done good to others and a sense of dissatisfaction when we might have done them good but have failed to do so.

POINT II.— **Under the Mosaic law.** This law is full of details inculcating on the Jews brotherly love towards each other and charity towards strangers. The prophets unceasingly reminded that stiff-necked people of this virtue and never reproached them more vehemently than with their neglect of it. They desired even that works of mercy should be preferred to those of religion: *"For this is the law and the prophets."*

Point III.— **Under the gospel law.** This law breathes and enjoys charity throughout; it refers everything to this beautiful virtue: *"He that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law;" "Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law"* (Rom. xiii. 8, 10). Let us, therefore, foster and practice a virtue which God has so much at heart, a virtue which even in this life promotes our own happiness as well as that of others.

Tuesday.

THAT TO BE SAVED WE MUST DO VIOLENCE TO OURSELVES.

"Enter ye in at the narrow gate"
(St. Matt. vii. 13).

Point I.— **Faith teaches us this.** The Scriptures speak continually of self-renunciation, of violence, of the cross, of watchfulness and of mortification in order to reach heaven. In Holy Writ eternal happiness is compared to a kingdom which is to be conquered, to a jewel for which all else is to be sacrificed and to a prize which runners in the race can win only by giving up what ever might hinder them from arriving at the goal.

Point II.— **Reason tells us this.** We feel that we are very weak as to doing what is right and that we have a strong leaning towards what is wrong; the law of our members is in ceaseless opposition to that of God, and evil example produces a powerful impression upon us. Without continual violence, therefore, we are unable to keep ourselves from sin.

Point III.— **Experience shows us this.** We must admit that if, hitherto, the business of our salvation has been neglected and, it may be, all the means to obtain it wasted, if we have been slack in God's service, have had but little sorrow in despite of our many sins and have been very inconstant in keeping our good resolutions, it has all been because we would not do violence to ourselves. What will become of us should we go on leading our present unmortified life? Is this the narrow gate through which alone Paradise can be entered? Let us seriously ponder over this and reform our life.

Wednesday.

On the Broad Way that leadeth to Destruction.

"*For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction*" (St. Matt. vii. 13).

Point I.— The Broad Way is a **dissipated life.** They who are living this kind of life naturally take the first path presenting itself, if it seem to be the easiest. But the most comfortable path and that most commonly trodden is the Broad Way. The height of misfortune is to commit oneself to it without strict examination, when it is a question of choosing a state of life, or of entering on some other important undertaking; in such case very rarely does any one return to the Narrow Way. Let us think how we have chosen our state of life and whether our forecast of our conduct extend to its details.

POINT II.— The Broad Way **the satisfaction of disorderly inclinations.** This is the easiest path; in it we can walk not only without restraint, but often with pleasure. It is further the most beaten, but woe to those who journey on it! They stumble at almost every step and reach the goal of perdition burdened with a multitude of sins, of which they were often quite unaware.

POINT III.— The Broad Way is **that of the vast majority.** *"Many there are who go in thereat."* We are treading this way when we follow, against all prudence, the customs of the world, when we allow ourselves to be swept along by the current of fashion and quiet our conscience by the example of others. Why should we rejoice that there are many like ourselves, says St. Augustine, since we know that few follow the right road? *Quid gaudemus ad multitudines?* We have, on the contrary, cause for alarm. Let us then live like the few.

Thursday.

ON THE LARGE NUMBER OF THOSE WHO WALK IN THE BROAD WAY.

"*And many there are who go in thereat*" (ST. MATT. vii. 13).

POINT I.— **Under the law of nature.** Almost the whole world was walking in it, and entire nations seem to have been without any really saintly people. There were but eight just men found on the earth at the time of the deluge. From the deluge to the time of Moses, the Scriptures mention only a very small number. The devil reigned over the universe almost without a rival. We should be startled at this widespread depravity of the human race.

POINT II.— **Under the Mosaic law.** Almost all the Jews walked in the Broad Way. They were constantly falling into idolatry, and when they returned to God, it was only for a while, until God should have delivered them from all their tribulations. After their captivity, there was no longer any question about idolatry among the Jews, but a carnal spirit replaced it, which led them to expect a temporal Messias. Few of the Jews were spiritual-minded, and the rest of the world wallowed in idolatry.

POINT III.— **Under the law of grace.** The multitude is still following the Broad Way. Besides the fact that Catholics make up but a small number as compared to the whole of mankind, few even amongst Catholics are truly

Christian. The towns are over-populated, and the poison of bad example has infected the country. Religion is losing power and seems to be dying out before our very eyes. Let us then lament this deplorable condition of the Church and follow the example of the small number of true believers still contained in her bosom.

Friday.

THE NARROW WAY.

"*How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it*" (ST. MATT. vii. 14).

POINT I.—To enter by the narrow gate, we must **do violence to ourselves,** and **few do this.** Almost all give way to unbridled passions, and especially some master-passion that they neglect to examine into, of the existence of which they are unaware, which they therefore fail to resist, but which involves them in ruin. Are we conscious of our ruling passion? Do we make war against it? Are we overcoming it?

POINT II.—**Few persevere in doing violence to themselves.** We have certain moments of fervor wherein we seem bent on conquering ourselves; but these moments soon pass, and we cease to fight, or we keep up the struggle only in a craven mode. This inconstancy in the spiritual combat points unmistakably to our danger of being lost; for we are unable to say we are striving to enter in at the narrow gate.

POINT III.— **Few reproach themselves with not using this violence.** The habit of indolence when once contracted is most difficult to get rid of. Conscience becomes warped as to what an unmortified life is, and provided we yield not to some great excess, we cease having self-reproach about anything. Not only then do we give up striving to enter in at the narrow gate, but we do not think it necessary to enter it at all, and lounge drowsily along the Broad Way. Let us fear such a state very conscientiously and never cease doing violence to ourselves until we have passed through the narrow gate.

Saturday.

ON FALSE DESIRES FOR SALVATION.

"Few there are that find it."

POINT I.— When, having some wish to save ourselves, **we put off using the means,** our desire of salvation is not a true one. The young put off the use until they arrive at middle age; when middle aged they defer it until old age, to which but few attain, so that the night comes in which they can no longer work. Some see that they are not walking in the strait way, but they hope to follow it some time or other, and that time never arrives. Such delays occur in the case of lukewarm souls as well as in that of sinners, and both classes die in lukewarmness and worldly disquiet, even as they have lived.

POINT II.— **We use not the means of salvation.** We think we can rely upon the ordinary means, and yet we use them but imperfectly; so that we fail because we aimed no higher than the mark. Let us consider well that in this matter we cannot be too sure, since the number of the saved may not be large. If all those be saved who are living a better life than we ourselves, could we affirm that few only will be saved?

POINT III.— **We do not use all the means of salvation.** Some practice exercises of piety, others merely perform works of charity. The former make the business of salvation consist in the absence of gross vices and the latter in injuring no one. All these persons are seeking to enter the narrow gate, yet they do not enter. Their desires for salvation are false. Is not this our own case?

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON PERFECT VIRTUE.

"*Every one therefore that heareth these My words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock*" (ST. MATT. vii. 24).

POINT I.— Bear in mind that there is no perfect virtue except that which is founded on the word of God, because this alone is based on sovereign truth. Moral virtues are indeed virtues, but, being built on mere human reason, are liable to many delusions, and, moreover, can never claim reward in the world to come. They have their reward here, and they merit no other. For this reason there was but **little real moral virtue among the pagans** and possibly less than little supernatural virtue. Pride was in the ascendant with most of their wise men.

Point II.—**The virtue of most** of the **Jews was not perfect,** because, although founded on God's word, they interpreted His word wrongly, and referred everything to the present life. The Pharisees, who were held to be the learned men of the nation, performed their good works chiefly to be seen and esteemed by men.

Point III.—**The virtue of worldly Christians is not perfect,** because it proceeds only from human motives. It is often Jewish, and sometimes even criminal, virtue. There is therefore no perfect virtue except among true Christians, who are guided by the word of God and do right by the light of faith. These build upon the rock, and what they build will endure for ever.

Monday.

ON THE POWER OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUE.

"That built his house upon a rock"
(ST. MATT. vii. 24).

POINT I.— **The virtue of Christians makes them stronger than the devils.** What can the devil do against a Christian who is deeply impressed with the truths of the faith and who is following a plan of life modeled upon the word of God? Such a one sees at once the falsehood of the suggestions of the lying spirit, while the confidence which he has learned to place in God will draw down upon him powerful graces with which to resist all temptations. *"He built his house upon a rock."*

POINT II.— **It makes them stronger than the world.** If the world offers charms to them, God puts before them fascinations which are infinitely superior. If the world threatens them, God also threatens them in a far more terrible manner. Their virtue is, therefore, immovable, since it is firmly founded on the word of God. *"He built his house upon a rock."*

POINT III.— **It makes them stronger than themselves,** because it enables them to conquer all their evil inclinations. Nay, the habit which they have formed of self-conquest even removes all real difficulty in doing this: so that the winds of temptation and the rains of tribulation beat in vain against their solid virtue: *"They beat upon the house, and it fell not, for it was founded* *on a rock.*" Let us appreciate virtue so unbending, which we often see in the lowest grades of society; let us imitate it, or else cease to flatter ourselves with being true Christians. How could we possibly endure martyrdom, if the devil, the world, or our evil inclinations are enough to overthrow us in the quiet course of our ordinary life?

Tuesday.

ON THE FOLLY OF CHRISTIANS WHO DO NOT LIVE ACCORDING TO THEIR BELIEF.

"*Every one that heareth these My words, and doth them not, shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand*" (ST. MATT. vii. 26).

POINT I.— **They are irrational in their conduct,** which is the greatest of all folly. They who are irrational only in their thoughts or words, are but half crazed and often only excite laughter; but if they perform wild acts, they excite pity and at times fear. Nothing is more extravagant than to believe and yet to live as though we did not believe.

POINT II.— **They are irrational in matters of highest importance.** We pity a madman who loses all he has, we shudder when we see him wounding himself and tremble when his folly urges him to put an end to his life. A bad Christian does far worse than this. He loses heedlessly the riches of heaven, which he knows were destined for him, and casts himself headlong into inextinguishable fire. If we reflected seriously on this excess of insanity, we should be terrified and raise an alarm whensoever we see wretched sinners surrendering themselves to it. We should fly to their aid, and conjure them to have pity on themselves and to remember what their faith teaches them. Possibly enough, we are no wit less mad-brained ourselves.

Point III.— **They make bold to pass for wise men.** Truly this is the very height of folly. They possess some moral virtues which elicit praise, and whereat they themselves wonder, while in the light of faith they are sunk in the depth of spiritual poverty and are victims reserved for everlasting fire. Let us not, however, despise, but pity them, pray for them and help them if we can; above all, let us never follow their example.

Wednesday.

On the Unhappiness False Virtue brings.

"And great was the fall thereof"
(St. Matt. vii. 27).

Point I.— **It affords no satisfaction in this world.** The consolations it procures, being merely human, leave ever a void in the heart and are of short duration. Often indeed counterfeit virtue does not obtain any of the advantages, fortune, or fame it promised; so that a person has all the bitterness of virtue without any of its sweetness.

Point II.— False virtue **will not be rewarded in the next world.** The whole structure will tumble at death, its ruins alone will remain: "*Great was the fall thereof.*" "*They have received their reward*" (St. Matt. vi. 5), said Jesus Christ, speaking of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Point III.— False virtue **will be punished in the next world,** and it is there that we can say most truly, "*Great was the fall thereof.*" What blindness is it to make what ought to have procured our eternal happiness serve for our torment, and this merely because we did not act from right motives! What a misery to have seemed virtuous and to share withal the fate of hypocrites! "*The Lord of that servant shall . . . appoint his portion with the hypocrites*" (St. Matt. xxiv. 51). Let us fear so terrible a misfortune.

Thursday.

ON THREE DUTIES WE OWE TO THE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*The people were in admiration at His doctrine*" (St. Matt. vii. 28).

Point I.— We **should value it highly.** It surpasses immeasurably the teaching of the sages of every age and every nation. It is wholly heavenly and by reason of its sublimity, wins the admiration of those even who have not courage to declare themselves its upholders. Since we admire it, let us congratulate ourselves on professing it and prefer it to all the sciences in the world, which are only idle fables in comparison: They *"have told me fables: but not as Thy law"* (Psalm cxviii. 85).

Point II.— **We should love it** and have no greater pleasure than that of instructing ourselves thoroughly in it and meditating upon it and no greater zeal than that of teaching it to others. It should be sweeter than honey to our mouth: *"How sweet are Thy words to my palate: more than honey to my mouth!"* (Psalm cxviii. 103).

Point III.— **We should practice it.** Admiration of the teaching of Jesus Christ would be of small account and the love of it merely a name, were we not to put it into practice. See the eagerness with which artists work at their calling and what annoyance they suffer if they are hindered from doing so. Let us act in like manner with reference to the teaching of Jesus Christ, and then shall we be true Christians.

Friday.

How we ought to Preach the Word of God.

"For He was teaching them as one having power" (St. Matt. vii. 29).

Point I.— **We ought to preach it with authority**: *"As one having power."* We preach in the name of God, we are His envoys to men, and He has promised us His all-powerful guidance. *"I am with thee,"* He says to us in Jeremiah, *"I will make them not to fear their countenance."* We should therefore not be afraid of the mighty ones of this world, nor hide from them the truth: we are stronger than they. Still less should we fear the learned of the day; one single truth which we preach is worth more than all earthly knowledge.

Point II.— **We ought to preach it with dignity.** Mere earthly eloquence impairs the word of God; but a careless style and uncouthness of expression dishonor it. Let us add dignity to simplicity and combine strength of reasoning with modesty.

Point III.— **We ought to preach it with zeal,** to be deeply impressed with what we preach and strive to impress it upon others. Without this, we should not be preaching, but only speaking; we should be, at best, mere declaimers. Let us examine as to how we acquit ourselves, each one of us in our degree, of this noblest of all functions.

Saturday.

How we ought to Hear the Word of God.

Point I.— We ought to hear it **with reverence.** God is speaking by the mouth of His ministers, and whatever be their manner of preaching, it is still His word they are announcing to us. The worst of preachers always tell us more of the word of God then we deserve; to be deprived of it would be the greatest of punishments to us.

Point II.— We ought to hear it **with love.** What can be more desirable than the word of God, which is the instrument whereby He performs all His works? By it He created the world; by it we receive faith, instruction and healing for our souls: *"He sent His word and healed them"* (Psalm cvi. 20). The love of the word of God will make us listen to it with eagerness, attention and devotion.

Point III.—We ought to hear it **with a great desire of profiting by it.** It is the food of our souls, and food is helpful to us according to the relish and appetite we have for it. Now we have the word of God not only in the public instructions of the Church, but also, and still more truly, in the Holy Scriptures. We have it also in spiritual books. Let us profit by it wherever we find it. Reverence, love and eagerness for the word of God are signs that we shall be saved.

Twenty-seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

"*The five foolish virgins, having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them*" (ST. MATT. xxv. 3).

POINT I.— These foolish virgins, who go to meet the bridegroom with their lamps lighted, but without oil to keep up the light, represent to us the common run of Christians, who are contented with the profession of the faith, **yet do nothing to render it living and active.** The maxims of the world and the mists raised by passions make dim and insensibly put out the light of faith within, because so many take no precautions to cherish and maintain it. We ought to cling to Jesus Christ, meditate on His teaching and follow His example, if we would not walk in darkness and lose the light of faith.

POINT II.—"*The bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept.*" The time which God grants us should not be a pretext for laxity, but rather a **motive for fervor,** since He would have us use it in preparing for the moment of His coming, a moment entirely unknown to us. We ought to fear the punishment of these foolish virgins if we give way to lukewarmness and sloth in the service of God.

POINT III.—"*At midnight,*" when they least expected it, "*There was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him.*" **What surprise, what terror** did these foolish and imprudent virgins feel when they awoke!

Leave perforce they must, but they are not ready. Their lamps are gone out, and they have no oil to keep them alight; they are not fit to appear before the bridegroom. To put off till to-morrow is to misuse to-day, which may be our last day, nor are we even certain that we shall live to see its close.

Monday.

"*At midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh*" (St. Matt. xxv. 6).

Point I.—Lukewarm and guilty souls reflect seriously on their condition only during some illness, when they see death approaching and are warned that they have to appear before God. What great folly to put off sowing until the time for reaping! We should pity their blindness and be afraid ourselves of becoming subject to it.

Point II.—"*Then all these virgins arose.*" Negligent Christians, who are fast asleep as to the evil state of their conscience, awake from their torpor at the approach of death; they are overwhelmed with regrets and weary themselves with making plans which are mostly impracticable. They wait so long before doing the necessary penance, that sometimes it becomes too late for them to know how to set about it, and they die without having done it well.

Point III.—"*They trimmed their lamps.*" At the moment of death the sinner strives to prepare for it, to make up for his past life, wash away his sins, repair his injustices and scandals; he does homage to the virtue he has despised, to the religion he has dishonored, to the God he has outraged. However, a heart accustomed to evil, encumbered with disease, perplexities and the troubles caused by the prospect of impending dissolution can be in no fit state to produce so difficult a change in so short a time. How much a person is to be pitied who puts off learning the nothingness of the things of this world and the importance of salvation, until death is at hand!

Tuesday.

"*Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out*" (St. Matt. xxv. 8).

Point I.—The sinner, on his death-bed, **recognizes** at last the **uselessness of his life:** "*Our lamps are gone out.*" He has recourse to God's ministers and to the Last Sacraments: "*Give us of your oil.*" But what can these powerful aids profit one who is a slave of the world and empty of any feeling for God? The science of salvation is not learnt in a moment. Let us strive to avail ourselves during life of these helps, to make a frequent and holy use of the Sacraments and to live for God; thus shall we know how to perform these salutary exercises, when we have to appear before God.

Point II.—At death the sinner recommends himself to the prayers of the Church and of holy souls; but the **good works of others will not suffice** to merit for him God's friendship. These suffrages are a powerful help to those who strive to merit them; but of what use can they be to those who render themselves utterly unworthy of them? The heavenly Bridegroom is touched by the personal merit only of the bride; He does not admit to the wedding-feast those who have nothing but merits of others to rely upon.

POINT III.— **Worldly people jeer at the pious,** criticise virtue and cause the good to be ridiculed and even hated. Will they act so at death? They will wish then that they had lived like the good and would sacrifice everything to have a share in their merit. What great folly to neglect and blame what we ought to love!

Wednesday.

"*While they (the foolish virgins) went to buy oil, the bridegroom came*" (ST. MATT. xxv. 10).

POINT I.— Negligent Christians are **nearly always surprised by death:** they who lose their life through some accident did not expect such an end; even they who are at death's door do not imagine that the end is so near; he who has but a moment to live still counts upon many hours and perhaps forms grand projects which he will have no time to carry out. *"While they went to buy, the bridegroom came."* We must be ever ready, if we would not be taken by surprise: *Ante judicium para justitiam tibi.*

POINT II.—"**They that were ready** *went in with the bridegroom to the marriage-feast,"* and no others; they who were preparing when he came were not admitted any more than they who had never thought about it. Our Judge is at the door: *"Behold, the Judge standeth before the door"* (ST. JAMES v. 9). Are we ready? If we are not, it is our own fault, because God not only warns us to prepare ourselves, but to keep ourselves ready: *"Be you also ready"* (ST. MATT. xxiv. 44).

POINT III.—*"They who were ready went in with the bridegroom to the marriage, and* **the door was shut."** Death fixes our lot for eternity: if we die in holiness, we shall be for ever with Our Lord; if we die in sin, we shall be in hell for ever. The doors of this abyss will never open again to allow us to leave it, nor the doors of heaven to receive us: *"The door was shut."* If we believe these great truths, why do we not think about them more seriously? If we do think of them, why do they make so little impression upon us?

Thursday.

"The door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins" (St. Matt. xxv. 11).

Point I.—The foolish virgins did come at last, but **came too late**: seeing themselves excluded from the feast, they burst into tears and abandon themselves to grief; they knock at the door and demand admission, redoubling their cries and entreaties: *"Lord, Lord, open to us;"* but all in vain, for it is too late. What a lamentable thing is loss of time, since it is so severely punished in these virgins, who are reproached with this only sin!

Point II.—"**I know you not.**" Terrible and hopeless answer to these unhappy ones! Have I no reason to expect the like? The title of Christian, the faith I profess, the good works I perform, virginity even, without the oil of charity and sanctifying grace, will not preserve me at death from God's justice: *"I know you not."* Let us strive to save ourselves from so terrible and irrevocable a malediction.

Point III.—"**Watch ye** *therefore,* **because you know not the day** *nor the hour.*" God warns us to be always on the watch, because He desires to find us well prepared: *"Watch."* He conceals from us the time of our death that we may avoid laxity, and may by our vigilance increase our merit: *"Because you know not the day nor the hour."* Let us, therefore, never do anything we would not wish to be found doing at the time of His coming: "*Watch.*" By far-sighted preparation we shall spare ourselves many needless troubles and many projects which occupy us only because we are still counting upon having long to live. Let us quiet our conscience; let us be like a loaded ship, fully equipped, which only waits for a favorable wind to set sail. This immediate preparation will not prevent our death, but will preserve us from an unhappy death: "*Blessed is that servant whom, when his Lord shall come, He shall find so doing*" (St. Matt. xxiv. 46).

Friday.

"*Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God*" (St. Matt. v. 8).

Point I.— Purity of heart, which ranks us amongst the blessed, **banishes** from the conscience **both mortal and venial sin,** resists vicious habits and inclinations, breaks off attachments to objects likely to lead us into sin and cause us to fail in the love we owe to God. It is the health of the soul and the most precious ornament of the body. We are bound to aim at possessing angelic purity; are we doing so?

Point II.— **Those who are pure will see God.** They will understand things spiritual and divine; will have for them a relish which the sensual man can never know. They will see God in heaven; and this vision, which is true happiness, is the peculiar reward of "*the innocent in hands and clean of heart*" (PSALM xxiii. 4).

POINT III.— **Jesus Christ**, the Saint of saints, **was purity itself**: His inclinations, purposes and whole conduct were worthy of the Godhead dwelling in Him. Never was there anything reprehensible in Him; He never loved anything but what was pure and holy. He even rejected actions which appeared to be holy, if they proceeded not from a pure heart and sincere intention. We should love a virtue He so dearly loved.

Saturday.

"*Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God*" (ST. MATT. v. 8).

POINT I.— They whom Our Savior calls "*blessed*" are in a special degree those fervent Christians, who, in order to be united more closely to God, **have voluntarily renounced the pleasures of the flesh**, have consecrated their body and mind to Him, wish to have neither affection nor desire for sensual and passing delights and long that Jesus Christ should hold entire possession of their heart, unshared by any creature. Let us say often to God, with one of the Saints: *Placet quod promisi.* Ah, Lord, how much my vow delights me! How happy am I that I have thus bound myself!

POINT II.— They who are chaste are blessed.

This divine virtue **raises them above** the condition of **mankind**, making them like the angels. It delivers them from a multitude of miseries; it renders them more capable of relishing the things of God; it fills them with sweeter joy than all pleasures of sense; finally, it gives them a peculiar right to see God, to possess Him and to be amongst those who follow the Lamb: "*They shall see God.*" "*These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth*" (Apoc. xiv. 4).

Point III.—**Let us see if there be anything to reform** in ourselves with respect to this beautiful virtue; if our thoughts, desires, words and actions are comformable to our engagement; if we are careful to avoid occasions that might lead us into evil, and are using proper means to preserve the precious treasure we are carrying "*in earthen vessels,*" according to the expression of St. Paul. These means are: prayer, humility, watchfulness over our heart and senses, avoidance of improper conversations, constant occupation, mortification and continual distrust of ourselves. Let us neglect nothing in order to preserve this precious virtue.

Twenty-eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

"Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me: that they may be one, as We also are" (St. John xvii. 11).

Point I.— Before leaving the Apostles, Jesus Christ commends them to His Father, begging Him to be their light, consolation, strength and support: *"Keep them."* He teaches us thereby that we ought **to pray for our pastors** and for evangelical laborers. We fail in love to God our Father, to the Church our Mother and to ourselves, when we take no concern about the ministers of religion. It is worse still if we thwart them in their good designs.

Point II.— Jesus Christ **addresses Himself to God** His Father, to show us His origin from His Father as God and His dependence on Him as Man. He invokes, in favor of His Apostles, against the corruption of the world the holiness of His Father: *"Holy Father;"* the power of His name against the powers of the world and of hell: *"In Thy Name."* Let us place all our confidence in these mighty aids, and we shall have nothing to fear from the world or from hell.

Point III.— Jesus Christ prays that His disciples may, **through union in heart** and feeling, be one, as He is one with His Father in essence and will: *"That they may be one, as We also are."* The early Christians were specified by this union, and by this mark Jesus Christ will acknowledge us as His disciples. This union should be very dear to us, and we should fear to introduce dissension.

Monday.

"The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world" (St. John xvii. 14).

Point I.—**The world cannot endure the good,** because their faith, behavior and principles are so many reproaches which silently condemn it. What cowardice were it, if the fear of the world should cause us to bid farewell to virtue! What a misfortune, were it to draw us into the disorders thus condemned! Is it not great folly to prefer the applause of a few licentious men to the esteem of the virtuous and to the friendship of God, on Whom our everlasting glory and happiness depend?

Point II.—**The world censures the good.** This is because it has not the courage to imitate them; with its lips it disdains those whom in its heart it esteems and whom it would like to resemble. Should we not be very blind, were we to fear censures which the worldly themselves condemn and were we to disclaim the piety which they cannot help esteeming?

Point III.—**The good are scorned by the world:** in this consist their glory and happiness. When we are welcomed and praised by the worldly, it is to be feared we are not as we should be. Jesus Christ and Christians have been persecuted by the world. We honor their sufferings; let us rejoice if we have a share of them in this life, because we shall then partake of their glory for eternity.

Tuesday.

"I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil" (St. John xvii. 15).

Point I.—It is **not necessary to leave the world** in order to attain salvation; but we are strictly bound to keep ourselves in every state of life from the corruption and abuses of the world: from pride, idleness and effeminacy, if in high position; from luxury, foolish outlay, ambition and hardness towards the poor, if wealthy; from murmuring, impatience, jealousy and injustice, if in poverty. If you avoid sins of this stamp and practice the contrary virtues and those belonging to your state of life, you will become holy even as many others have done; but if you fall in with the disorderly ways of the world you will lose your soul like so many others. To which of these classes have you belonged hitherto? To which will you belong for the future?

Point II.—**God desires the salvation of those** who are living **in the world,** since He points out to them its dangers. He offers them aids to preserve them from these and has left them apostles and ministers, to labor for their sanctification. Let us correspond with the kindly intentions of our Divine Master; let us address Him often in prayer and meditate on His holy word; let us make a good use of the Sacraments and profit by the prayers, advice, instructions and labors of workers in the vineyard; let us imitate good Christians; we shall thus preserve ourselves from the corruption of the world and shall even arrive at Christian perfection.

Wednesday.

"They are not of the world: as I also am not of the world" (St. John xvii. 16).

Point I.—**There is a world which Satan rules over as king**: *"The prince of this world"* (St. John xiv. 30). Worldly people who are led by his spirit are his subjects. It is a world where sin, ambition, avarice, voluptuousness and impiety hold rule; a world which is not according to God, but is cursed by God: *Væ mundo!* which God forbids us to love: *"Love not the world"* (1 St. John ii. 15), and which every Christian has renounced at baptism: *"They are not of the world."* Is my life Christian or worldly? Is it conformed to the maxims of Jesus Christ or to those of the world? The former leads to heaven, the latter to hell. What can be more worthy of my attention?

Point II.—**God condemns not the different conditions**, or different circumstances, **of the**

world. True believers sanctify themselves in the world while the evil-minded and the recreant lose their souls even if retired from it. The feelings of the heart make all the difference between them. A true Christian avoids occasions of danger, he fears the customs and throng of the world and severs himself from its turmoil from time to time, that he may bethink him of his salvation. He uses the things of the world as if he used them not; while seeming to work for things of earth, he is, rightly speaking, serving God alone. The worldly man, on the contrary, while seeming to be sometimes serving God, is only thinking of and clinging to the riches of the world and laboring only to gain them. This blindness we should bewail in worldly people and fear in ourselves: *"It is good for me to hold fast to God"* (PSALM lxxii. 28).

Thursday.

"Not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me" (ST. JOHN xvii. 20).

POINT I.— **Jesus Christ prayed** not only for the Apostles, but **for all Christians**: *"For them also who . . . shall believe in Me."* He was acquainted with all my needs, and He suited His requests to them; He is all-powerful with His Father: therefore, if anything is wanting to me, the fault will be my own.

Point II.— He **prays for those who shall believe** in Him through the Divine word: *"Through their word."* By it Jesus Christ has converted the world, and by it He teaches us to know God, love and serve Him. They who meditate most upon it are those who serve Him best, because they know Him best. If we serve Him languidly, it is because we do not know Him. Upon this Divine word we should often meditate, that we may advance in a knowledge so sublime and necessary. *"Grow in grace and in the knowledge of Our Lord"* (2 St. Peter iii. 18).

Point III.— He asks **a second time, for all Christians**: *"That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee."* In so often recommending this union, He teaches us how dear and pleasing it is to Him, how perfect, pure and holy it should be accounted amongst us; because the union of the Father and the Son is the pattern of this bond, since in Father and Son we ought all to be united. Shall we never learn to be ashamed of dishonoring our holy religion and of grieving our brethren so often by our malice and self-love?

Friday.

"*The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them: that they may be one, as We also are one*" (St. John xvii. 22).

Point I.— By baptism and by grace, the **Son of God** by nature has first **made us share His glory,** in raising us to the dignity of children of God by adoption: "*That we may be called and may be the sons of God*" (1 St. John iii. 1), and by making us partakers of the Divinity: "*Partakers of the Divine Nature*" (2 St. Peter i. 4). He has united us so intimately to Himself, that He does not disdain calling us His brethren: "*He is not ashamed to call them brethren*" (Heb. ii. 11). He considers us His members, forming one body with Him, of which He is the Head: *Membra Christi, caput Christus.* He has communicated to us His spirit, which is the soul and life of this wonderful body, the tie which binds all the members to each other and to their Head: "*One body and one spirit*" (Eph. iv. 4). A Christian who sustains his dignity by his principles and conduct is an object of complacency to God, and of admiration to the angels; the joy of the Church and the consolation of true believers. What honor can be more worthy of my ambition?

Point II.— Christ makes us **partakers also of His glory in the Eucharist,** giving us His Flesh, His Blood, His Soul and His Divinity: "*He changeth him that eateth,*" in order to transform us into Himself and cause us to live by His spirit: "*He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me*" (St. John vi. 58). It would be but little to thank God for so many favors, unless we strive to render ourselves worthier of them and make a better use of them.

Point III.— Jesus Christ will, after this life, communicate His glory, especially and most abundantly, to a Christian. He will raise Him from the dead brighter than the sun: "*I will raise him up*" (St. John vi. 40). The Divine Head will reunite Himself for ever with His members in everlasting glory: "*That where I am, you also may be*" (St. John xiv. 3). He will gather together His faithful followers in the bosom of His Father, to share with them the privileges, riches, joys, delights and ineffable glory of the heavenly inheritance which his Father has bestowed on Him: "*That they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me*" (St. John xvii. 24). Let us long for this happy reunion with our Head, which will make us like Him: "*We shall be like to Him*" (1 St. John iii. 2). We must, however, remember that in order to arrive at it, we are to suffer and humble ourselves as He did: "*If we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him*" (Rom. viii. 17).

Saturday.

"Just Father, the world hath not known Thee" (St. John xvii. 25).

Point I.— **We pity the portion of idolaters,** who know not God; we condemn worldly people, who have only a shadowy notion of Him. Are we less to be pitied, we who are proud of knowing God and yet serve Him in so cowardly a way? Attachment to things of earth prevents so many from attaining to the knowledge of God: is there no fear lest our lukewarmness prevent us likewise from possessing Him?

Point II.— Jesus Christ has taught us with His own sacred lips **to know the greatness,** holiness, power and goodness of **God**; by His example He has shown us how to serve God. He is still conferring on us this favor through His teaching, His ministers and the abundant graces He bestows on us, in preference to so many thousands. I did not merit this favor any more than they, yet I abuse it every day by sinning with greater knowledge. Have I no reason to fear a more terrible punishment?

Point III.— Jesus Christ has raised us to the knowledge of our God, so that **we may strive to obtain the happiness of being loved as He is** by our heavenly Father: *"That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them;"* and that we may carefully preserve the precious advantage of being always united to Christ as members to their head: *"And I in them."* By doing the will of His Father, Jesus merited His love; by doing the will of Jesus, we shall remain firmly united with Him. When God has labored so much, prayed and suffered so much for us, can we still be afraid of doing too much for His glory and our own happiness? "*But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him Who is the head, even Christ*" (EPH. iv. 15).

MEDITATIONS FOR THE FEASTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

ON THE PREDESTINATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

POINT I.— From all eternity **God Almighty chose Mary to be the Mother of the Word Incarnate,** destining her by this choice to possess the highest dignity that can possibly fall to the lot of a human being. Whatever is most great in heaven or on earth is as nothing in comparison with this exalted dignity. Mary is to be the Queen of men and angels, the Mediatrix of intercession between God and men. Let us thank God for the exalted dignity conferred upon our loving Mother and for having out of His great love for us raised her to this height of glory.

POINT II.— God **predestined Mary to the fullest holiness** that a creature can possibly be gifted with. There is neither sin nor imperfection in the Blessed Virgin. Sanctifying grace in her surpassed that found in any man or angel. She was to have every virtue in supreme degree. All actual grace and all merit she was to acquire through grace, have never had, and never will have, anything to equal them. Let us beseech God to grant us some share in her holiness. Let us strenuously endeavor to acquire it.

POINT III.— God **predestined Mary to have the highest glory** that any mere creature can ever possibly possess in heaven. All that is not God is to be below Mary. Let us congratulate her on such eminence of glory. Let us strive to merit her patronage.

December 8.

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

POINT I.— The Blessed Virgin was **conceived without the original sin** which stains the soul of the rest of mankind. Her character, as Mother of God, the honor of her Divine Son, her office of mediatrix, required this privilege. In her conception she was filled with graces and blessings, had the free use of reason and employed it to consecrate herself to God. Let us rejoice with the Church at this special favor vouchsafed to the Blessed Virgin. Let us protest that we will never doubt it, and will hold until death this pious belief.

POINT II.— The Blessed Virgin was the **Mother of God**, Queen of men and angels, Mistress of the universe; yet to be the Immaculate One was to her more precious than any other privilege, because as such she was more agreeable to God. What God esteems in us, what He loves and what is the only thing worthy of our esteem and love is grace, virtue, holiness, and not mere advantages of body, mind, or high estate.

POINT III.— The Blessed Virgin, conceived without sin, and without tendency to sin, without disorder of the passions, albeit confirmed in grace by a special providence, did nevertheless **stand in fear of sin**; she avoided the occasions of it and was ever on her guard. What should we do, who are not confirmed in grace, who are born in sin, whose whole inclination leans towards it and who are full, moreover, of evil habits?

February 2.

FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

POINT I.— The Blessed Virgin, in order to be obedient to the law of God, **hid away** from the eyes of men **her character of Queen, of Virgin** and of **Mother of God.** She who submitted herself to the humiliating precept of purification, could not, to all appearances, possess any of those qualities. Let us learn to obey; even when before the world our honor is at stake, God is well able to uphold it.

Point II.— The Blessed Virgin **makes a sacrifice of her Son,** offering Him generously to God, not as a matter of ceremony, as other mothers did, but in order that He might be consecrated to God as the world's victim. Let us offer to the Almighty whatever we have that is most precious. Our love is what He craves, but a love true, tender and generous.

Point III.— The Blessed Virgin, **as Mediatrix of intercession,** offers in Sacrifice her Divine Son to appease an offended God, and this is the only Victim that could appease His wrath. Let us offer it ourselves in expiation of our sins. Let us thank our Holy Mother for what she has done in our behalf and implore anew the protection of our powerful Patroness.

March 25.

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION.

Point I.— After having recalled to mind what passed between the Archangel Gabriel and the Blessed Virgin in the chamber at Nazareth, let us ponder the wisdom, goodness and mercy of God, Who determined **to save the world by** so wondrous a means as **the Incarnation** of the Eternal Word. Let us also apprehend that sin, from which He desired to deliver us, is something very terrible, since it was needful to apply to it a remedy so extraordinary. Let us thank God for His mercy, and let us abhor sin.

Point II.— Let us consider the excessive **humiliation of a God made Man** and become even a little Child in the womb of the Blessed Virgin: He Who is eternal, impassible, immortal, almighty, all-wise, nay, wisdom itself, becomes subject to time, to suffering, to death; lowly, weak, nay, even a babe. The Creator unites Himself to our created nature, in order by means of His humiliations to make reparation for affronts offered to God and to teach us humility by His example. How base is it for a worm of the earth to give way to pride in the very sight of a God Who has stooped to lowliness so abject!

Point III.— Let us reflect further on the sublime **dignity to which the Blessed Virgin is raised.** She is the Mother of God — a privilege which uplifts her above angels and men,— and, that she may acquit herself worthily of so wondrously high a station, God loads her with graces and blessings with a profusion that never will be equalled. Let us rejoice with our kind Mother at the great marvels God has wrought in her; let us place ourselves afresh under her holy protection.

ON THE VIRTUES PRACTICED BY THE BLESSED VIRGIN AT THE ANNUNCIATION.

POINT I.— The Blessed Virgin was living in the practice of every virtue, the Holy Spirit thus **preparing her to become** shortly **the Mother of God.** When she knew that the time was near for the coming of the Messias, she longed for it most earnestly, that she might see her God glorified and man freed from the tyranny of sin. This was what she petitioned for in her prayers, this was the object of all her desires, and by her intercession and supplications she deserved that God the Son should hasten the time of His Incarnation. Let us conceive fervent desires for the glory of God and for our everlasting happiness: God will not fail to satisfy them.

POINT II.— When the Angel saluted the Blessed Virgin, she gave proof of her **modesty** in being troubled at sight of an angel in human form; she manifested her **prudence** in not agreeing at once with what was said to her; she showed her **faith** in believing what the Angel announced to her on the part of God; she set forth her **love of virginity** by preferring it to the honor of becoming the Mother of God; she evinced her **humility** by calling herself the handmaid of the Lord, and displayed her **obedience** in submitting to His commands. Let us imitate our Holy Mother in all these virtues.

POINT III.— When, after her consent, the Holy Ghost had formed in her virginal womb the

Sacred Body of the Messias, and she had conceived the Son of God, she **adored Him with profound reverence**; loved Him as her God and as her Son; offered herself to Him to serve Him and to enter into all the designs that had led Him to make Himself Man. How blessed should we be, if before, during and after Holy Communion, we knew how to practice the virtues taught us by the Blessed Virgin! We should have need of no other method of making a good Communion.

ON THE ANGELICAL SALUTATION.

POINT I.— **Hail, full of grace.** The Angel salutes the Blessed Virgin as the envoy of the august Trinity, for the loftiest purpose ever designed, namely, the Incarnation of the Word. The angel, out of reverence, addresses her not by her name Mary, but calls her "*full of grace,*" which is a more glorious title. She was in every sense "*full of grace*";— in her mind, her heart, her memory, her actions: she possessed sanctifying grace, actual graces, supernatural virtues, all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and this fullness of grace surpassed all that the saints have ever possessed. Let us congratulate our Blessed Lady and ask for some participation in this grace.

POINT II.— **The Lord is with thee,** not only by His essence, presence and operation, as in other creatures, or by grace, as in the just; but by a very special grace, love, tenderness and close union; by special protection and the direction of all her powers and all her life, and that for ever. Let us act in such wise as that God may be in us as He was in our holy Mother.

POINT III.— **Blessed art thou among women:** thou art the only one exempt from the curse of sin, of barrenness and of the pains of childbirth; thou art the source of all blessings, as Eve was the source of all maledictions. Angels, men and all creatures will bless thee and award thee praises unnumbered; to these will I unite my own during life, in expectation of being permitted to bless and praise thee throughout eternity.

ON THE SECOND PART OF THE ANGELICAL SALUTATION.

POINT I.— St. Elizabeth added, "**And blessed is the fruit of thy womb.**" Jesus, the Savior of the world, possessing the Godhead with all its perfections, contains in Himself all possible blessings. He is the source of all blessings which will be communicated to men, as well in the order of grace as in that of glory. Through Him the predestined will be blessed by the heavenly Father; to Him, throughout eternity, they will sing canticles of praise, blessing and thanksgiving. Let us strive to be of the number.

POINT II.— The Church concludes this salutation by the words: *"Holy Mary, Mother of God,* **pray for us sinners** *now and* **at the hour of death."** We call her by the name *"Mary,"* to show our tender love for her; we call her *"holy,"* because that is the quality she values most; we address her as *"Mother of God,"* which is the culminating point of her dignity, to testify that we hope everything from the power this title imparts to her; we ask her protection and her prayers throughout life, but above all *"at the hour of our death,"* when we shall most need it. We say these words very, very often: let our devotion and confidence infuse into them due life and spirit.

POINT III.—We conclude with the word **Amen**; that is, we wish this may be, we hope it will be, we pray it may come about. We should begin and end all our prayers with such desire and such confidence.

ON THE DOUBT OF ST. JOSEPH.

See page 28.

ON THREE CAUSES FOR JOY WHICH THE BLESSED VIRGIN HAD WHEN CARESSING OUR SAVIOR WHILE STILL A CHILD.

See page 44.

On three Causes for Sorrow which the Blessed Virgin had when caressing Our Savior while still a Child.

See page 45.

On three Causes for Joy which the Blessed Virgin had while our Blessed Lord was working.

Point I.— The Blessed Virgin felt the greatest joy **in conversing with our Divine Redeemer,** in serving Him and learning from Him the great mysteries about to take place in the founding of the Church. How many lights and graces and consolations must she have received in such holy discourse! We, too, should take delight in meditating on the same mysteries, believing the same truths and experiencing the like consolations. To this intent we must love Our Lord and desire to converse with Him. Let us ask the Blessed Virgin for such love and desire.

Point II.— Mary rejoiced at seeing that some there were who **recognized her Son as** being what He really was — **the Son of God**; that they obeyed His doctrine; attached themselves to Him, and that true religion and true worship of God were about to be established in the world. Let us rejoice because our adorable Savior has been acknowledged and worshiped throughout the world. Let us, by our homage and strict observance of His law, acknowledge Him as our Lord.

Point III.— The Blessed Virgin experienced a peculiar joy on beholding **the miracles wrought by her Son,** the praises bestowed upon Him and the crowds of people who followed Him to hearken to His heavenly teaching. Relatives, friends, and all true-hearted people congratulated her, called her "*blessed*" and wished her a thousand blessings. Let us congratulate our Holy Mother on hearing such glorious things said of her.

On three Things which grieved the Blessed Virgin during her Son's Preaching.

Point I.— She suffered extremely on witnessing the arduous labors of her beloved Son, His poverty and lack of all things and the **contempt, ill-treatment and calumnies** He encountered. She well knew such was the will of heaven and that her Son submitted Himself to all with complete resignation, and she had need of the same for herself. Let us learn to bear all kinds of ills with the like resignation.

Point II.— The second cause of affliction was **the sight of the obstinacy of the Jews** in not believing in the Messias, and in rejecting His grace. She grieved at sight of so many fruitless labors, such base ingratitude and the manifold crimes daily committed by enmity to her Son. We in a manner renew her grief, when we allow the graces that cost her Son so dear to be wasted on us.

Point II.—Her deep grief was caused by her foreseeing the **evil which would befall her much-loved people**, the whole Jewish race, by reason of their obstinacy. She knew that her Son, to punish this obstinate nation, would reject them wholly and take away their religion and worship; she knew that the Jews would be accursed by God and that nations more docile and faithful would take their place and become the favored people. If we realized, as the Blessed Virgin did, the magnitude of the punishment, we should pity the multitudes who have forfeited the gift of faith, together with the vast number of sinners who have lost grace, and should tremble for ourselves.

On the Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin during the Passion of her Son.

Point I.—Let us consider what must have been the sorrow of the Blessed Virgin, **when her dear Son bade her a last farewell**, when she beheld Him expire on the Cross and when she received His dead body into her arms. Let us sympathize with the deep sorrows of this holy Mother. Let us ask her pardon for being the cause of them: *Fac me verè tecum flere.*

Point II.—Let us meditate why God willed that His innocent Mother **should suffer sorrows so exceedingly bitter.** He wished it that she might be like to her Son, Who was the most afflicted of men, that she might gain fresh glories and be proposed to us as a pattern in our own afflictions.

POINT III.— Let us ponder **the virtues which the Blessed Virgin practiced in her sufferings:** unshaken patience, entire submission to the commands of heaven, heroic generosity, tender love for her God, an admirable spirit of religion, sacrificing for the honor of God a Son Who was to her infinitely dearer than life itself. After having marveled at these eminent virtues in the Queen of martyrs, let us beg her to obtain for us from her dear Son the needful graces to profit by her example and imitate her virtues, if it should please our Divine Savior to give us a share in her humiliations, sorrows and cross.

OF THE REMEMBRANCE THE BLESSED VIRGIN RETAINED OF THE PASSION OF HER SON.

POINT I.— The glory of Our Savior's **resurrection effaced not** from His holy Mother's mind the memory of **His Passion and Death.** St. Paul believed in the glorious Resurrection, yet he bore always in mind the Passion and Cross of his Master; he knew only *"Jesus Christ and Him crucified."* St. Peter and St. Mary Magdalene wept during the remainder of their lives at recollection of the sufferings Jesus had undergone to blot out their sins. Other saints have meditated continually on these sufferings and urged us to do the same. The Church puts on mourning every year, and sheds tears over the Passion of Jesus Christ. To the Blessed Virgin this mental picture of Calvary was more vivid still: she felt Christ's sorrows more than others did, because she loved more.

POINT II.— In her meditations while visiting the holy places of Calvary, the Sepulchre, and in the Sacrifice of the Mass established as a memorial of that upon the Cross, she **felt renewed within her the sorrow she had experienced** on witnessing the death of her Son. At recollection of this, she wept bitter tears throughout her life.

POINT III.— The thought of the Passion of her Son **kept up her love for Him,** her gratitude and confidence. If we cherish it in our mind, we shall derive the like virtues from this holy thought. It will serve, moreover, as a powerful motive for contrition, for hope of the remission of our sins and the salvation of our souls. *"If we suffer together, together shall we reign."*

ON THE BENEFITS RECEIVED BY THE EARLY CHRISTIANS FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

POINT I.— **She was their counsellor.** God left His Holy Mother to the world after His Ascension, that the Apostles and the new-born Church might learn from her all that related to religion, the truths of the faith, the ceremonies of our mysteries and the practice of virtue. She was consulted as the living oracle and the instructress of the faithful. Let us have recourse to her in our doubts, and she will obtain for us the all-needful light.

Point II.— The Blessed Virgin was **the Exemplar of the Church.** Modesty, fervor, humility, charity, devotion, every virtue shone in her. In all conditions of life, under every phase of fortune, on all occasions, each one beheld in Mary how he ought to shape his behavior; her life is a finished model of every kind of perfect holiness. We can and should profit by her example. To walk in her steps is true devotion to her.

Point III.— She was **their refuge.** In their private afflictions, in public persecutions and under all necessities, the faithful had recourse to the Mother of God; they knew her power and that her goodness caused her to employ it to help them. Let us make use of these motives to animate our confidence.

July 2.

FEAST OF THE VISITATION.

Point I.— The Blessed Virgin shows **deference to St. Elizabeth:** she honors her by her visit; without regard to the fact that she is the Mother of God, she goes to her cousin first, salutes her first and pays respect to her with admirable humility. We have countless reasons for esteeming those with whom we associate: they are the servants and children of God; they are loaded with graces and favors from heaven. We know not ourselves what we are in God's sight. We ought to treat others with respect and deference, in imitation of the Blessed Virgin.

POINT II.— The Blessed Virgin **manifests her love for St. Elizabeth.** She loved her naturally as her near relative; and this love, sanctified by supernatural charity, became stronger and more marked; it was further strengthened by their meeting, by the tokens of affection and by the conversations of these two great Saints. Our faith, our calling, our hopes, Our Savior's wish, the command He has given us, all these oblige us to love one another. Let us, then, not fail in so pleasing a duty.

POINT III.— The Blessed Virgin gives proof of **the wish to be of use to her relative,** and she renders numberless services in her house. If, as opportunities arise, we help each other in our labors, our troubles, our sicknesses, we may say that we love one another; that is only a feeble friendship which is exhibited in compliments and empty show.

ON WHAT OUR LORD DID AT THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

POINT I.— **As regards the Blessed Virgin,** Our Savior employs her as intermediary in cleansing St. John from original sin and loading his parents with graces and blessings. Jesus teaches us in so doing that the Blessed Virgin, His Mother, is the intercessory help of sinners, as well as the patroness of the just. Let us have recourse to her, that we may abandon sin and increase in virtue.

POINT II.— **As regards St. John,** Christ not only purifies him from sin, but fills him with grace; He enlightens his understanding, strengthens his will and fills his soul with unutterable joy. The holy precursor, while still in his mother's womb, recognizes his God, adores Him, loves Him. When our Blessed Lord comes to us in the Eucharist, or by interior visiting, He produces similar effects, if we allow Him to do so. Whence comes it that we have profited by them so little?

POINT III.— **As regards St. Zachary and St. Elizabeth,** Jesus honored them with His presence, filled them with grace, brought a blessing into their house; He set before them the example of humility, obedience, charity, devotion and piety, which His Holy Mother furnished. Let us profit by this example and especially by the sentiments of humility, gratitude and devotion which she manifested in her canticle: *"My soul doth magnify the Lord"* (ST. LUKE i. 46).

ON THE DEATH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

POINT I.— The Blessed Virgin, in order **to be quit of all that was mortal, had to die**; also to submit to the general law that condemns all men to death; finally, to be in all things like her Son. She submits to death with profound humility, with entire confidence in the goodness of her God, with an ardent desire to resemble Him and be reunited with Him, Who was the object of all her love. How happy our death will be, if we accept it in such dispositions!

POINT II.— The Blessed Virgin **dies without fear** or agitation of mind, in perfect peace of conscience, **without suffering** or bodily disease, but only through the strength and vehemence of her love for her God. Her Son is present to fill her with joy, to receive her beautiful soul into His hands and to conduct it in triumph to heaven. Let us rejoice with our Holy Mother in the unspeakable sweetness of her death and desire for ourselves a holy death.

POINT III.— The Blessed Virgin is **appointed** by her Son **the protectress of the dying**: she is their pattern. She protects them by obtaining for them the grace to die well and teaches them to prepare, by angelic purity, by complete detachment and by tender love, for a good death. Let us strive to acquire this frame of mind and to merit Our Lady's protection by our devotion, our confidence and our prayers: *"Now and at the hour of our death."*

ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

POINT I.— The first privilege of the Blessed Virgin's resurrection is, that after death and entombment her **body was preserved from all decay** and corruption. God kept this sacred body with special care, as indeed was fitting, since it had had the honor of receiving the Word Incarnate and of being consecrated by the inward presence of her God, become her Son. In Holy Communion we receive the same God made Man, and by His presence He confers on our bodies the privilege of resurrection: *"I will raise him up"* (ST. JOHN vi. 40). Let us foster this firm hope, that it may strengthen us against the horrors of death.

POINT II.— The second privilege of this resurrection was **that she rose** from the dead **at once.** Others will rise again only at the end of the world; but Mary, without undergoing this wearisome delay, rose again as soon as her body was laid in the tomb. Her Son, who assumes the title of the Resurrection and the Life—*"I am the resurrection and the life"* (ST. JOHN xi. 25), — would not delay giving resurrection and life to that sacred body from which He had received His own. Let us rejoice with our gracious Mother at this special favor, and in everything concerning our own resurrection submit to the decrees of Providence.

POINT III.— The third privilege of the Blessed Virgin's resurrection is that it was **accompanied**

by a glory beyond the power of words. The Blessed Virgin herself contributed to this, her beautiful soul returning from heaven to resume her body and communicate to it her glory and her happiness. Her Son, accompanied by His angels and saints, honored this glorious resurrection. Let us aspire to a resurrection of a like nature.

August 15.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.
ON OUR LADY'S GLORY IN HEAVEN.

POINT I.— Let us consider the **glory of the entrance into Paradise** of the Mother of God, the pomp and state with which her Son welcomed her, the endearments He bestowed on her, the joy and acclamations of all the blessed Court of heaven. All the choirs of angels and the saints acknowledged, greeted and honored her as their Queen, their Mother, their Help. After having congratulated her on this glorious entry, let us cherish the desire to be where she is; let us prepare to join her.

POINT II.— Let us consider the **greatness of the glory** Mary possesses in Heaven. The title of "*Mother of God,*" the inconceivable fullness of her grace, the merits of a long life spent wholly in the practice of most heroic virtues, in acts of the most perfect holiness that ever was or ever will be, the important services she rendered to her God and her Son, all these were the causes of glory that never will be equalled and that raises her above every thing that is not God. Let us labor joyfully for a God Who is so liberal in His rewards.

POINT III.— In the vast store of glory the Blessed Virgin possesses in heaven, she is: first, the object of the admiration, the blessings and the tenderness of all heaven; secondly, she it is who obtains for us God's most potent and saving graces: *Totum nos habere voluit per Mariam;* thirdly, she is the **Protectress, Queen and Mother of the Church** and of all the faithful; fourthly, she is the object of the firm and tender confidence of the just as well as of sinners anxious to be converted. Let us pray to her every day to protect us in life and to usher us into heaven *"at the hour of our death."*

ON CONFIDENCE IN THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

POINT I.— The Blessed Virgin **knows what is necessary for us.** She is able to help us and loves us tenderly. Her love will induce her to grant us what she knows to be needful and whatever she can procure us. Hence our first ground for confidence is her knowledge of our needs. This knowledge is due to her, since God has given her to us as our Advocate, Queen and Mother. She is bound, therefore, to have a care for us. Still, if when she looks upon us and sees us to be living in sin and disorder, she cannot acknowledge us as of her household, she rejects our service and does not exert herself to bring us aid.

POINT II.— The second ground for our trust is in **the power of our Protectress.** She has all power with God; she is His favored one and His beloved Mother: nothing is refused to her prayers. She is the treasurer and dispenser of God's gifts. Still, she does not employ her credit to obtain for us what would be in the way of our salvation, nor would she have us abuse the gifts she procures for our benefit.

POINT III.— The third ground is **the love she bears us** in the character of Mediatrix and of Mother. *"To each one of us may be said: Behold thy Mother."* From this we derive our sweetest hopes. In our sufferings, afflictions and temptations, let us go to Mary, let us invoke Mary: *"She must not be absent from our mouth, nor absent from our hearts."* Let our thoughts, affections and words, all maintain this trust.

September 8.

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

POINT I.— **Mary is born for God,** to serve Him, to love Him, to be His Mother and to enter into all the designs for which He made Himself Man. Let us begin to live for God and regret the time ever since our birth during which we have not lived for Him.

POINT II.— **Mary is born for men,** to be their Mediatrix, Advocate and Mother. We should place all our confidence in her, next to that we must place in God. She will protect us if we have recourse to her, and we shall be blessed when she protects us.

POINT III.— **Mary is born for her own sake,** that she may acquire immense treasures of holiness, merit and glory. We should imitate her especially in this. Let us thank God for having given us so powerful a protectress, and so perfect a model.

ON THE AUGUST NAME OF MARY.

POINT I.— The Blessed Virgin receives the name of Mary, which signifies **one giving light,** because she was to give to the world the Sun of justice to dispel the darkness of sin, and because she was to obtain for us the light of grace to guide us. We should rejoice in the rising of this splendid Day-star and ask her, with confidence, to help us to withdraw from the darkness of sin and to obtain the light of grace.

POINT II.— "Mary" signifies **Sovereign Lady.** We should acknowledge her as such; we should render to her the respect, allegiance and service this title demands, and we should do nothing unworthy of faithful subjects of so perfect a Sovereign.

POINT III.—"Mary" signifies **Bitter Sea.** She had a larger share than any other person in the bitterness and afflictions of her dear Son. If our Redeemer so far honor us as to allow us to partake of His sufferings, let us accept them gratefully and try to imitate closely the patience, generosity, and resignation of our loving Mother.

November 21.

FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

POINT I.— Mary devotes and **consecrates herself to** her **God as soon as** she is **capable of doing so**; this she does, too, most promptly. We have not as yet given ourselves to God as we ought; we are continually putting off giving what He has a right to expect from us. Let us assure Him that though we have been long in giving ourselves entirely to Him, our mind and our heart are now quite taken up with Him. *"Too late have I known Thee, too late have I loved Thee, O infinite Goodness!"* (ST. AUGUSTINE).

POINT II.— **Mary gives herself without reserve**; her consecration was not partial; everything in her was God's. Is it not an insult to God to offer Him a heart divided between Himself and His creatures? Is it not an injury we do ourselves, since all that is not done for God is lost?

POINT III.— **Mary gives herself for ever;** and never did anything contrary to this consecration of herself. Let us blush for our inconstancy and oft repeated acts of unfaithfulness and promise God that from this day forth we mean to yield ourselves irrevocably to Him.

ON THE LIFE THE BLESSED VIRGIN LED IN THE TEMPLE.

POINT I.— **In the holy dwelling-place.** The Blessed Virgin in the temple looked on herself as living in a holy sanctuary, vowed to God and His holy service. She knew that in this hallowed dwelling-place her sole duty was to become a Saint herself, by serving the God of the Temple. The religious life we are called to lead has every advantage: it is a holy life and wholly consecrated to God; we ought to think only of sanctifying ourselves in it and through it.

POINT II.— **In His sight.** Mary lived always in the presence of God, united constantly to Him by thought, affection, and occupation. Our life should be of like character, if we would have our withdrawal from the world to be of service to us. *"The solitude of the body cannot benefit us, if the solitude of the mind be wanting."*

POINT III.— **Have I ministered.** She was occupied in the worship of God, for the well-being of the house and the service of her companions. We ought to have the same feelings of love for our occupations and the performance of our duties. Let us imitate the intentions, fervor and perseverance of the Blessed Virgin.

MEDITATIONS FOR FEASTS OF SAINTS.

November 30.

Feast of St. Andrew.

Point I.— St. Andrew took up the Cross **as a disciple of Christ**; attached himself to Jesus by renouncing the world, and submitted to the gospel, that he might observe its precepts rigorously, together with its counsels of perfection. If we have left the world and professed that we are anxious to take up the Cross of our dear Lord, why do we carry it with so bad a grace?

Point II.— St. Andrew preached the Cross **as an Apostle** and traveled over many provinces to convert people to Our Lord. He labored and taught, putting himself to a thousand inconveniences, that he might make unbelievers submit to the shame of the Cross; and he succeeded. We preach to Christians, console them and rouse them by the example of a crucified God; what we say to others let us apply to ourselves.

Point III.— St. Andrew suffered the Cross **as a martyr**; longed for it with all his heart, hastened to it eagerly, embraced it joyfully, died on it generously: *O bona crux, diu desiderata!* Let us search into our conduct, to see if we possess the like feelings as to the Cross and as to sufferings.

December 3.

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER.

"*I became all things to all men*" (1 COR. ix. 22).

POINT I.— St. Francis Xavier **was all for God**; all his person, plans, labors and the whole of his life. Let us recall to mind part of what he did to make God known and loved. How happy should we be, were our thoughts, designs and whole life devoted to God's service!

POINT II.— St. Francis Xavier **was all for his neighbor.** How much he undertook, how much he accomplished and how much he endured for the salvation of souls! The faithful whom he baptized are reckoned by hundreds of thousands, and the portions of the earth won by him for God and the Church are mapped out by provinces and kingdoms. Let us be ashamed of our unwillingness to work assiduously for God.

POINT III.— St. Francis Xavier **was all for himself.** Whilst laboring for others, he thought ever about securing his own salvation and perfection. His examinations of conscience, his prolonged meditations, his seclusion whenever he could manage to be in some solitude or at the foot of the altar, together with his constant mortifications, make clear that he never forgot himself. Unless we labor earnestly to save our own soul, we shall never be fit to win other souls to God.

ON THE DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER.

POINT I.— Three things made the death of St. Francis Xavier holy and surpassingly sweet. The first was the prodigious **number of good works** and holy actions he had performed during life. These are the lamps which he held while waiting for the Bridegroom: *"Lamps burning in your hands"* (ST. LUKE xii. 35). *"So let your light shine"* (ST. MATT. v. 16). Let us do good while able and our death will be a good one.

POINT II.— The second thing was **the saintly habits** he had **contracted** during life, which caused him to act as a Saint when dying. He believed, hoped, loved and lovingly pronounced the holy Names of Jesus and Mary, because he had done all this throughout his life. Let us form holy habits; they will influence us at the hour of death.

POINT III.— The third cause of his holy death was **the Providence of God.** He had abandoned himself to God's care during his life, and God had care for his death. It was not God's will that he should have any human help to comfort him; Providence alone consoled him in death as it had been his trust in life. He died in the arms of Him to Whom he had given himself. Let us surrender ourselves to the same loving Providence, and it will take care for our death.

February 5.

FEAST OF THE THREE JAPANESE MARTYRS.

POINT I.— Grace made them **three holy Religious.** It withdrew them from the midst of unbelief to make them embrace Christianity and afterwards caused them to enter the religious state, where they practiced the most heroic virtues; thus preparing them for martyrdom. Let us be encouraged by the example of these Saints to acquire the perfection they attained in so short a time.

POINT II.— Grace made them **three holy apostles.** They preached the faith of Jesus Christ in their native country, despite the threats and persecutions of the tyrant monarch. In the public squares, in the prisons, on the cross, they proclaimed the Christian faith, and their holy life was a visible proof of the truth they upheld. Our preaching and labors will bring forth much fruit in souls, if they are accompanied by good example.

POINT III.— Grace made them **three holy martyrs.** They suffered ill-usage and imprisonment with constancy; heard with firmness their sentence of death; joyfully greeted the cross whereon they were to suffer; died on it with Christian fortitude, and, in dying, converted very many heathens. Let us beg them to obtain the conversion of others and virtue, zeal and patience like theirs for ourselves.

February 24.

FEAST OF ST. MATTHIAS, APOSTLE.

POINT I.—"**The lot fell upon Matthias**" (ACTS i. 26). What seems to us chance, or a disposition of men, in the guidance of the world or of our own selves in particular, is an effect of the Providence of God, Who rules all events with infinite wisdom and goodness. Let us adore this Providence and submit joyfully to God's commands.

POINT II.—"**And he was numbered with the eleven Apostles.**" What a happiness it was for this Saint to have been raised to so great a dignity! And how fortunate are we to have been called to a similar vocation! Let us strive to fulfill it.

POINT III.—**Judas by his treachery forfeited the Apostolate.** Who then has not cause to fear for his steadfastness? Let us endeavor not to render ourselves unworthy of persevering. Let us ask God every day, particularly at Holy Communion, for the gift of perseverance.

March 7.

FEAST OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS.

POINT I.— St. Thomas left the world and all his family expectations, in order **to follow Christ in poverty** and to merit the rewards Jesus has promised to those who follow Him. Let us revive our faith and our hope in these promises and deepen in our mind the contempt we have conceived of the world.

POINT II.— St. Thomas was **great as a Religious.** To the observance of his vows and of his rule, he united devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to the Passion of Our Lord and to the Blessed Sacrament. We can and should imitate him in his regularity and his devotion.

POINT III.— St. Thomas was **great as a Doctor of the Church,** but it was not this that made him a Saint. He sanctified himself by the godly use he made of his knowledge and by conforming his life to what he knew he ought to do. We shall be learned enough if we use our lights to glorify God and perform what we know God requires from us.

March 19.

FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH.

POINT I.— St. Joseph was the happiest of men; by reason of **the choice God made of him** to be the reputed father of Our Savior and the husband of the Blessed Virgin, so as to make use of him in the most important of all affairs, namely, the redemption of the world. Let us congratulate this Saint on his high dignity and on the graces and blessings God bestowed on him to enable him to act up to it.

Point II.— St. Joseph was the happiest of men **in life.** His familiar dealings with Jesus and Mary, their example, the graces and means of salvation he was every moment receiving were to him the source of eminent holiness. Let us recall to mind this intercourse and this example, that we may profit by them.

Point III.— St. Joseph was the happiest of men **in death.** He died attended, comforted and encouraged by the Blessed Virgin his Spouse and passed away in the arms of Our Savior, through Whom he hoped for the happiness which Jesus was able to give him. Let us be devout to Jesus, Mary and Joseph during life; they will make happy our death. Let us beg the Saint to obtain for us this favor, the most momentous of all. Let us lay before him that Jesus, Who obeyed him on earth, will refuse him nothing in heaven.

April 25.

FEAST OF ST. MARK, EVANGELIST.

ON THE THREE QUALITIES OF EVANGELICAL LABORERS.

POINT I.—"**You are the salt of the earth**" (ST. MATT. v. 13), Our Lord said to them; which means that they are to heal what is wounded, preserve what is sound and impart a relish for things eternal; but if the salt have lost its savor, it is good for nothing, it will be thrown away and trodden disdainfully under foot. This is what happens to laborers who are not what they ought to be.

POINT II.—"**You are the light of the world.**" Evangelical laborers should receive light from God, as do the stars from the sun. Study, prayer and meditation will fill us with this heavenly light.

POINT III.—"**A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid.**" Gospel laborers are exposed to the view of the world: they should set only good example.

May 1.

FEAST OF ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES.

ON THREE THINGS OUR LORD RECOMMENDS TO HIS DISCIPLES.

POINT I.—The first is **patience**: *"I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves"* (ST. MATT. x.

16). We must be prepared to suffer many things if we desire to labor for the salvation of souls.

POINT II.— The second is **disinterestedness.** We must look for nothing save the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbor. Any one who labors selfishly for the world only and its vanities cannot advance the interests of God.

POINT III.— The third is **great zeal:** *"The harvest indeed is great"* (ST. MATT. ix. 37), and ready for the reapers. We must work, and ask God to bless our labors.

May 3.

THE FINDING OF THE HOLY CROSS.

The Cross, which we have so often before our eyes, teaches us four great truths. The first **is the value of our soul,** since God, Who knows all things, shed His Blood and gave up His life on the Cross in order to ransom our soul. Let us not lose it, but take all the care of it which it deserves.

The second truth is the **heinousness of sin,** since, in order to expiate it, it was necessary for a God to die upon a cross. Let us hate sin with all our heart.

The third truth is the **severity of the Divine justice,** since God chose so terrible a mode of satisfaction. Let us keep this justice in dread.

The fourth truth is the deep **love our Re-**

deemer has shown for us. Let us love a God Who died on a cross to show us His love.

June 16.

FEAST OF ST. JOHN FRANCIS REGIS.

"To the poor the gospel is preached"
(ST. LUKE vii. 22).

POINT I.— St. John Francis Regis may well be called **the Apostle of the Poor.** The reason why he was inflamed with zeal for them was that he found in them more motives for compassion, more grounds for consolation and more occasions for merit. The rich, he said, have the bread of the word in abundance, while the poor often perish for want of this food. Alas! they are deprived alike of spiritual and temporal help. Can we remain unmoved by this kind of poverty, even if we have no feeling for their other misfortunes?

POINT II.— Generally speaking, it **is more consoling to labor** for the salvation of **the poor.** We speak to them more freely, they listen with greater docility, have fewer allurements to sin and fewer hindrances to virtue. The conversions which cost St. John Francis Regis least were the conversions of the peasants. Let the rich tremble at their condition; let the poor appreciate their good fortune; let apostolical men examine into the sources of their zeal: if their sole aim is to labor in the field of Our Lord, who can prevent them from reaping so easy and so bountiful a harvest?

POINT III.— As a common rule, there is **more merit gained** in our dealings **with the poor**: our charity is purer; the deceptions of self-love are less to be feared; faith alone promotes and sustains our efforts. "*In working for the poor,*" said St. John Francis Regis, "*I shall gain more and risk less.*" Oh, how many gospel laborers will have no further reward than the applause and fame gained among the rich! Were we then to consult our own interests only, we ought to employ ourselves more willingly for the poor.

June 21.

FEAST OF ST. ALOYSIUS GONZAGA.

POINT I.— He was **in the world, without** his heart **being attached to the world,** and his only thought was to serve God in the most perfect way. Let us in our state of life do what this Saint did in his.

POINT II.— He became a Saint **by giving up the world** with a generous contempt for it; he had made a sacrifice to God of all he had and of all he could expect to have. We, in our degree, have made a similar sacrifice; let us renew it joyfully.

POINT III.— He became a Saint **by ever rejecting the spirit of the world**; not to do this is a failing many are guilty of; let us not be of the number.

Feasts of the Apostles and Martyrs of England

POINT I.— **What we owe to the** Apostles and **Martyrs of England.** By the ministry of these great Saints we now share in the graces brought to us in the Church of Jesus Christ. These men it was who banished idolatry from amongst us, overthrew the idol temples, preached the word of God, planted the faith in our country and sealed it with their blood. What great obligation are we under to them for so unspeakable a benefit! How can we acknowledge it, save by causing that seed of religion to fructify, which they watered by their sweat and with their blood?

POINT II.— **What we owe to all the successors of our first Apostles** and to our own pastors. They succeed to the ministry of our early Saints, watch for the good of our souls, to them is entrusted the saving of our souls, and they will have one day to render an account of them to Jesus Christ. Let us therefore pray for them, and be submissive and obedient to them. Our obedience will cause them to acquit themselves of their heavy charge with joy and not with grief, which, as St. Paul observes, would be to our great loss.

POINT III.— **What we owe to ourselves.**

First, to continue firm in the faith; not to have, if possible, any connection, either of friendship or companionship, with the enemies of religion, unless with the object of contributing to their conversion. Secondly, to have a thorough aversion to all books which might weaken our religious principles; a single reading of one such work, were it only during a quarter of an hour, might be capable of shaking our faith. Thirdly, to regulate our conduct, not by worldly maxims, but according to the gospel: what would it avail us to possess true faith and contradict it by our works; to believe as Christians and live like heathens; to have been born in the true religion and disgrace it by disorderly conduct? We congratulate ourselves on being the children of the Saints who preached to us the Word of God; let us then live holily as they did, that is, with the life of faith, since it is only by such title that we can hope for the happiness of the Saints whom we honor as our apostles. "*Remember,*" says St. Paul, "*your prelates who have spoken the word of God to you: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation*" (HEB. xiii. 7). This is the true way to honor them and merit their protection.

June 24.

FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

POINT I.— The angel who foretold the birth of the holy Precursor said he would **be great before the Lord,** austere towards himself and zealous for the salvation of others; that the Holy Ghost would dwell within him and would guide him in all his acts. We ought to be convinced that the only true greatness is to be great before God, who sets value on virtue and holiness alone. Let us imitate the greatness of St. John and, in order to do this, give ourselves up to the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

POINT II.— St. John was the **first to be sanctified by Our Lord** after His Incarnation. Jesus cleansed his soul from original sin before birth; He bestowed on him a profusion of sanctifying grace; He gave him the gifts of the Holy Ghost, infused virtues and abundant actual graces; He anticipated in him the use of reason; He made Himself known to him; He filled him with holy joy. What is still more observable is, that from the time when St. John was sanctified he began to live for God. Let us too live now for God, if we have not done so from our earliest years.

POINT III.— At the birth of St. John, **God worked wonders in the house** and bestowed upon his parents all kinds of blessings. His birth was a matter of public rejoicing, but the greatest favor of all was that the hand of God was already on him, never to be withdrawn. Let us entreat Our Lord, since He comes to us to-day, to take us for ever under His protection and give us grace to abandon ourselves entirely to His holy guidance.

June 29.

FEAST OF ST. PETER.

POINT I.— Our Savior chose St. Peter for His chief Apostle, to be the father of Christians and His Vicar on earth; for this end He gave him three things. The first is **His teaching**, making him the oracle of the world and the faithful interpreter of the truths of religion. Let us be thankful to God for having made known to us these truths and be confounded at the unworthiness of our life.

POINT II.— The second thing is **His authority.** Jesus gave St. Peter very great power by reason of his primacy in the Church for the guidance of the faithful. Jesus, moreover, gave him the light, zeal, charity and meekness necessary for the rule of souls. Let us thank God for having placed us in the bark of St. Peter, to wit, the Church Catholic, where we are assured of salvation, unless we ourselves choose to lose our souls.

POINT III.— The third thing is **His cross**, St. Peter wishing to die upon it as Jesus his Master died. He died thereon with a generosity worthy of the head of the Church, and of a faithful disciple of Jesus crucified. This cross was a gift no less worthy of St. Peter than his high dignity and his apostolate. It is a principle with us that crosses and afflictions are not a less benefit than endearments and consolations. Let us show forth by our conduct that we are fully convinced of this truth.

June 30.

The Commemoration of St. Paul.

Point I.— St. Paul accuses himself of having been carried away by the vehemence of his blind zeal to become a blasphemer and persecutor of the Church of Jesus Christ; he wishes to teach us that guilty conduct is no obstacle to great holiness, when there exists a sincere desire to abandon it and give oneself to God. Let us detest our wicked doings, and beg forgiveness for them. God will gladly grant it.

Point II.— Grace prepared the way for the conversion of St. Paul: it sought him out when we went astray, urged and by its mighty power overcame him, and out of a great sinner made of him a great Saint, and even a great Apostle. Let us thank God for having borne with us in our disorders and for having withdrawn us from them by his grace. Let us love him with our whole heart, and be as much devoted to him as we have heretofore been hostile to Him.

Point III.— St. Paul, having given himself to our Blessed Lord, **loved Him alone** and loved Him dearly. For Him alone he labored, and for His glory; he made Him known with true zeal, he suffered dire persecutions, cruel tortures, chains and death for His honor and the gospel's sake. If we are not able to do as much as this great Apostle did, let us at least do what we can for Jesus. He will accept our good desires and will reward our labors; our crown is already being prepared for us.

July 25.

Feast of St. James, Apostle.

Point I.— The mother of St. James **makes request for her sons of worldly greatness.** Our Blessed Lord urges them to acquire heavenly glory. Let us consider how blameworthy is the ambition of this woman and how inspiring the ambition Jesus Christ suggests to us, moving us to desire eternal riches.

Point II.—"**Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?**" (St. Matt. xx. 22.) This is the means whereby Our Savior proposes that we should gain heavenly treasures. This chalice is bitter; but Jesus drank of it first. He Himself offers it. He offers it to those most nearly related to Him, to His best friends. It is soon drained. These truths are so many mitigations of our sufferings.

Point III.— St. James drank of this cup generously. He underwent labors, persecutions and death and after these was seated at the right hand of his Lord in heaven. Let us admire his generosity, congratulate him on his happiness, aspire to the like glory, and let us not complain if our Blessed Lord ask us to walk along the same road.

July 31.

Feast of St. Ignatius.

On the Vocation of St. Ignatius.

Point I.— God Almighty made choice of St. Ignatius, calling him to Himself and to His holy service, from the tumult of war, the entanglements of the world and the irregularity of his life. After having appreciated anew this vocation, let us consider in what ours resembles it, that we may thank God for both the one and the other grace.

Point II.— The means which God made use of to draw the Saint to Himself are truly marvelous. His shattered limb, his imprisonment, his irksome tedium, his inability to find any romances to read, his being forced to put up with Lives of the Saints, the appearance to him of the Blessed Virgin and of the chief of the Apostles, St. Peter, were the means God employed to win him to God. Let us recall to mind what God has done to attract us to His service, and we shall be convinced that He has had special care, coupled with extraordinary love, for us. *"In this have I known that Thou hast chosen me."*

POINT III.— God called St. Ignatius in order to sanctify him and make him **the father of a vast number of saints**, a zealous defender of the Church, an Apostle of the world at large and a wonderful instrument of His glory. How many graces and merits, how much glory would this great Saint have lost, had he been untrue to his vocation! Let us work out our own calling; it has the like aim and end.

ON THE DESIGNS OF ST. IGNATIUS IN FOUNDING HIS SOCIETY.

POINT I.— St. Ignatius sought to make God known, loved and served throughout the world, by every class of people and for all time. **He aspired to serve the Church** by opposing her enemies, reforming the faithful, converting unbelievers. He resolved to save souls, laboring for all future ages, for all conditions of people and for all nations. He aimed at driving ignorance out of the world and restoring the science of salvation. Let us admire his greatness of soul in these designs and blush that we are doing so little for God.

POINT II.— He **chose the best means to insure success** is his plan. Study, teaching, preaching, the administration of the Sacraments, direction, missions in every portion of the world, the most devoted attachment to the Church and the Holy See are a part of the means which he wished the Society to employ. How are we, each one in his degree, using these means?

POINT III.— Let us be astonished at **the success God gave him**: unbelievers converted, heretics put to confusion and brought back to the one fold, morality re-established, the frequentation of the Sacraments introduced, people of all conditions instructed in the science of the saints — such was a part of his success. Let us thank God for the blessing He has bestowed on St. Ignatius and his children. Let us too have part in these generous purposes and ask God to continue to bless them.

August 10.

FEAST OF ST. LAURENCE.

POINT I.— St. Laurence **desired to suffer for his God**, and, when the wished for occasion presented itself, he bore everything with patience, perseverance and joy; he even mocked at the pagan tyrant. We are willing to suffer when great inconvenience is felt by us, but when trouble does come, our impatience and our sadness make evident the unreality of our desires.

POINT II.— The love St. Laurence had for God **made him anxious to suffer** greatly.

"The love of God could not be extinguished by fire." We shall suffer generously if we love God, Who has suffered for our sake, Who sends us sufferings and Who takes complacence in seeing us suffer, that He may be able to reward us.

POINT II.—The love St. Laurence had for God caused him **to love the poor, who are the children of God** and brethren of Jesus Christ. We exhort others to love the poor and to do them good, because they belong to Our Lord. We too should have care for each other with great charity and much earnestness.

August 13.

FEAST OF ST. JOHN BERCHMANS.

ON THREE SPIRITUAL MAXIMS OF THIS SAINT.

POINT I.—**"Unless I become holy when young, I shall never be holy."** *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"* (ST. MATT. xii. 34). The maxims that any one has constantly on his lips, give us an insight into his life and reveal to us the motive power that rules it. Hence the fixed resolve of the Saint to become holy forthwith explains the determination of his character and the secret of his success: namely, he set an end clearly before him and pursued it with earnestness and perseverance until he had attained it. God wishes us to be holy and gives us superabundant grace. Why then are we not holy? The reason is not far to seek.

POINT II.—“**My greatest mortification is the Common Life.**” The Saint did nothing extraordinary in the way of fasting, or vigils, or disciplines. His pious practices were part of the day's work and expected from every member of his Order: prayer, examination of conscience, spiritual reading, daily Mass, frequent Confession and Communion, hard study, punctuality at duties, poverty, chastity, obedience, humility and self-effacement, charity leading to supernatural love, especially of all his companions in Religion. Truly, the means of holiness are near at hand. No one need ask: Who will take wing and fetch them from afar?

POINT III.—“**I will burst asunder rather than break one of my Rules.**” So great an esteem had the Saint for the Rules which St. Ignatius drew up for the guidance of life, in praying mentally and vocally, in studying and taking recreation, in eating, drinking, sleeping, walking, looking at others, conversing with them and all other apparently trivial actions, that the book containing these Rules was ever open on his table by day and was placed by him under his pillow by night. He never passed a day without meditating on some portion of it. He asked, when dying, that it might be brought to him and passed away with it in his hands. The sanctity of this holy youth was the outcome of his scrupulous observance of rule. He kept all the Rules, in all particulars and in all perfection. Hence he was an angel on earth and the model of a human life.

August 24.

FEAST OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

ON THE VOCATION OF THE APOSTLES.

POINT I.— Let us consider the **high dignity of the Apostolate,** the loving choice God made of the first Apostles, and the end He proposed to Himself when calling them. They whom God has chosen for a similar purpose should out of gratitude be surprised at the goodness of the great God Who has called them.

POINT II.— Let us consider **the graces God bestowed on the Apostles** in order that they might carry out their vocation, the instructions He gave them and the examples He placed before their eyes. All this was meant for us as well as for the Apostles. Let us profit even as they did.

POINT III.— Let us consider **the faithfulness of the Apostles** in following their vocation, all their zeal and labors, the tortures they endured, their world-wide fame, their reward. These are so many motives to rouse us to do what our vocation demands.

August 25.

FEAST OF ST. LOUIS, KING OF FRANCE.

POINT I.— The life of St. Louis **is very instructive for us.** This holy king possessed all the virtues and great qualities suitable for his lofty position and those equally which make a perfect Christian: humility, patience, charity, piety, mortification. What a matter of confusion for us, that a king should become holy in a state of life where everything seems to be opposed to holiness, while we who are in a state of life where all tends to sanctity, are not saints!

POINT II.— **His death undeceives us.** We see that greatness, riches, glory and royalty itself do not prevent any one from dying; that at death we all become equal; and that nothing but sanctity can afford us security when passing through the terrors of our last hour. Let us choose holiness in preference to all else.

POINT III.— The glory of St. Louis **in heaven and on earth inspires us with courage.** We see the great ones of the world pass away and lapse into eternal oblivion, and often into irreparable woe, while the saints die only that they may reign for ever. Hence we must conclude that it is better to be a saint than to be a king. Providence did not choose us to be kings in this world; but desires that we should reign as monarchs in heaven, which is infinitely more to our advantage.

August 28.

FEAST OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

POINT I.— The change worked in St. Augustine was wondrous great. Out of a young voluptuary **grace made a very rigorous penitent.** Throughout his life he wept over his sins, did penance for them and when dying was reciting the Seven Penitential Psalms. How is it that we, convinced as we are that we have most grievously offended God, avoid so carefully all penitential exercises?

POINT II.— From being a **haughty man of learning, grace made** of him a humble and **docile believer.** No saint had ever greater reverence for whatever is practiced in the Church, or was more submissive to all that was taught him. Such a spirit of docility in a believer is a sign of predestination: *Erunt omnes docibiles Dei* (ST. JOHN vi. 45). Libertines alone play the sceptic and freethinker as regards the truths of religion.

POINT III.— From an obstinate heretic **God made him one of the greatest Doctors** of the Church. All the intellect, light and learning he possessed, he employed in the service of the Church and for its defense, and the benefits he conferred upon it were of the highest order. The talents God has given us let us use for Himself and His Church and not for vain and ambitious purposes.

September 9.

FEAST OF ST. PETER CLAVER.

POINT I.— Perhaps the most striking characteristic of this Saint was that **his life was planned on an heroic scale.** Nothing lower than the very highest degree of heroism would satisfy his love of perfection. Born and trained in luxury, he consecrated himself to the salvation of the blacks. At the conclusion of his philosophical studies in the Society of Jesus, he petitioned to be sent to New Granada, at that time the market of Eastern produce and especially of human flesh. After a delay of two years the coveted permission was granted, and he immediately set off, though yet unordained, as though fearing that the leave might be revoked. What an example to us all!

POINT II.— His heroism was shown not only by choosing the most comfortless of the foreign missions then known, but **by his labors** during nearly forty years amongst a race of people the most despised and abhorred on the face of the earth. When he took his last vows, he signed himself, "*The Slave of the Negroes for ever.*" They came packed closely in the holds of ships, covered with sores, many of them hovering between life and death. The Saint used to promise a novena of Masses to the person who first brought him news of one of the slave-ships having been sighted. He was like a merchant watching the arrival of his ship freighted with pearls and precious stones and rejoicing to see the vessel in port and all his treasures safe to hand. What would the world be if even some few had the zeal for souls of St. Peter Claver!

POINT III.— The following details may help to show more fully **the extent of his heroism.** On the arrival of every slave-ship, he hurried on board, taking with him disinfectants, food, medicines, chocolate, tobacco, articles of clothing, everything that could comfort and gratify them. He escorted such as had survived the horrors of the voyage to the sheds in which they were huddled together like cattle, lived with them by day and night, instructing and baptizing them, hearing their confessions, preparing them to make their first Communion or to meet their God after death, consoling them with the hope of a happy eternity, covering the most suffering amongst them with his cloak, or putting it under them to protect them from the wet and damp, or from the blood flowing from their wounds. It is related that the cloak always emitted a sweet odor. At the end of thirty-two years, he was stricken down by the plague. His heroic life was crowned by the ingratitude of those chiefly who had experienced the greatest proofs of his love. Water could not quench, death could not destroy that love. The Saint loved the Negroes for God's sake and was the only one who went near them without the intention of profiting by them. Again, what an example of zeal carried to its highest point!

September 14.

FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS.

POINT I.— The Exaltation of the Holy Cross took place not only when the Emperor Heraclius carried it in triumph; but it was exalted **when God chose to make it an object of veneration** to the universe; so that it has become the chief ornament of every crowned head and the most glorious mark of distinction amongst men. Let us hence learn that God can cause glory to be the outcome of our deepest humiliations.

POINT II.— The Exaltation of the Cross **is still more admirable in the Church,** which regards it as the bed of her dying Spouse, the throne of His love, and the instrument of His victory. She has taken up the Cross as the means of making herself known. In her Sacraments and in all her ceremonies she shows forth the Cross, with the Cross gives all her blessings and encourages all hopes. Since we are Christians, the Cross should be not our glory only, but the object of our confidence.

POINT III.— The Cross is also **exalted in the mind** and heart **of every believer.** In it each finds the source of solid consolation. In temptations, fears and afflictions the Cross sweetens our sufferings; it gives us courage against the devil and reliance on the approach of death. Let us not seek our consolation and trust anywhere else.

September 21.

FEAST OF ST. MATTHEW.

POINT I.— St. Matthew **toiled,** as a collector of the customs, to **gain worldly riches,** but our Blessed Lord called him to follow Himself, that he might win heavenly riches. He was blessed in being summoned to God's service and still more blessed in obeying the call with faithfulness. Let us correspond faithfully to our vocation.

POINT II.— St. Matthew, in order to declare himself publicly a disciple of Our Lord, **prepared a banquet, to which he invited Jesus** and all the most important men of business who were his friends. Our Blessed Savior invites us to His table in order to declare Himself our friend. Let us stand by Him, come what may, without fear or human respect.

POINT III.— St. Matthew **wrote his gospel,** and not only practiced what it contains, but gave also his labors, sufferings and life, in order that the truths this gospel teaches might be received with welcome. We believe in the same gospel; we should not be satisfied with doing this, or even with practicing what it contains: we should also lead others to the practice of the eternal truths.

September 29.

FEAST OF ST. MICHAEL.

POINT I.— **Let us consider the folly of Lucifer,** his overbearing pride, disobedience, punishment, torments: let us from our inmost heart detest pride and rebellion. Will God spare these in a mere mortal on earth, after having punished them so severely in an angel of heaven?

POINT II.— Let us consider the **loyalty and submission of St. Michael,** his zeal in upholding the rightful interests of God and the happiness that followed upon his victory. Let us imitate his humbleness in obeying God. Let us fight for God's glory: we also shall have a share in the happiness of St. Michael.

POINT III.—"*Quis ut Deus?*" said St. Michael: **is there any one like unto the Lord God?** Let us say the same, that we may be able to overcome all human respect. Is there any one who deserves our love and our service as God does? Is there any one whose rewards are more to be desired or whose threats are more to be feared? Let us attach ourselves to Him alone.

October 2.

FEAST OF THE GUARDIAN ANGELS.

POINT I.— Let us gratefully wonder at the fatherly goodness of **God,** Who **gives to each of us an Angel for our guide.** Let us at the same time be astonished at the perfect submission of these noble and blessed spirits, who accept willingly the charge of a despicable mortal, because God commands them so to do. Let us be persuaded that there is nothing great save what is in accordance with God's commands and that whatever is opposed to them deserves nothing but contempt.

POINT II.— The Guardian Angels **protect us against the enemies of our salvation**; deliver us from innumerable evils; remove from us occasions of sin and ruin; inspire us with good thoughts; console us in our afflictions; pray for us and offer our prayers to God; encourage us to walk in the way of holiness and of heaven and never quit us until they have brought us into the presence of God. How are we profiting by their loving care for us?

POINT III.— **We owe three debts** to our Guardian Angels: honor and reverence, since they are always present with us; love, since they love us so dearly; confidence, because they guard us with admirable zeal. Have we this reverence, love, and trust?

October 11.

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS BORGIA.

POINT I.— Three things helped this great Saint to detach himself from the world. The first was **the sight of the Empress Isabel in death.**

While contemplating her hideous and disfigured corpse, he understood better than ever before that beauty, pomp, or wealth cannot preserve great potentates from the grave and corruption, that in this world everything passes away, everything perishes. He made a generous resolution never to serve a master subject to death. Let us follow his example and detach ourselves from everything that death can take from us.

Point II.— The second thing was a thorough knowledge of the troubles and vexations which accompany the life of worldly people. He knew that even when they seem happy, they are in reality miserable and find nothing in all their wealth but vanity and affliction of spirit. He resolved to aspire after those riches which alone were able to satisfy him, namely, the treasures of eternity.

Point III.— The third thing was the danger that people of the world constantly incur of being lost for ever. Forgetfulness of God, negligence about their salvation and occasions of sin seem to be inseparable from their condition. Our Saint believed a person should sacrifice everything in order to save his soul. Let us thank God for having caused us to form a like resolve; let us strive to carry it into execution.

October 19.

FEAST OF ST. LUKE, EVANGELIST.

POINT I.— Our Blessed Lord requires three things from His followers. First, He would have them **ever ready to undertake** and suffer **everything for His glory,** without distinction of place, persons, offices, or labors. Have we so universal and generous a zeal? Do we not seek the most comfortable positions, the most honorable employments and the kind of work most agreeable to our inclinations?

POINT II.— Jesus wishes His followers **ever to have lamps burning in their hands,** which means that their words should be upheld by their good example, that they should enlighten mankind by their teaching and attract by their holy life.

POINT III.— Jesus wishes His followers to be always **ready to appear before their Master,** Who will summon them to give an account of their conduct. He wishes us so to live that when we come to die we may never be taken by surprise.

"Let your loins be girt and lamps burning in your hands and you yourselves like to men who wait for their Lord" (ST. LUKE xii. 35–36).

October 28.

FEAST OF THE APOSTLES ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE.

ON THREE REQUESTS WHICH OUR LORD MADE TO HIS FATHER FOR HIS APOSTLES.

POINT I.— Jesus **asked His Father to protect His Disciples:** *"Holy Father, keep them in Thy name"* (ST. JOHN xvii. 11); and the disciples, animated by the hope of this protection, went fearlessly wherever the glory of God called them. We should fear neither the power, the high standing, nor the violence of the enemies of God or of His Church. He will protect us so long as we labor for Him.

POINT II.— Jesus prayed that **they might dwell in fraternal charity:** *"That they may be one as We also are one;"* and He wished His true disciples to be known by such charity. This brotherly love makes life pass pleasantly, renders us pleasing in God's sight and most useful to our neighbor.

POINT III.— The third thing Jesus prays for, is that His disciples, though **living in the world, should not be infected by its spirit:** *"I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil"* (ST. JOHN xvii. 15). What an inversion of order would it be, if, instead of inspiring the world with the spirit of Jesus Christ, the world should induce us to adopt its own! This evil is to be dreaded by those who hold intercourse with the world without bearing in mind that they are disciples of Jesus Christ.

October 30.

Feast of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez.

Point I.— **This Saint is a model of humility.** He left the world after the death of his daughter, his son and finally his wife enabled him to enter the Society of Jesus, when he was approaching his fortieth year. Finding that he could not master the studies required for the priesthood, his superiors admitted him for the edification of his holy example and for the benefit of his prayers. He exercised the office of Porter in the College of the Jesuits in the town of Palma, in Majorca, for nearly forty years. During all this time he never left the island nor even the town. No one was like him in this. *Non est inventus similis illi.*

Point II.— **He was a model of prayer.** All his spare time was spent in prayer. The sadness of his countenance was the effect of his prolonged meditations on the Passion. While waiting to be summoned to the door by visitors to the Fathers, or by the numerous students, he remained with his eyes fixed on the Crucifix or the Tabernacle, bathed in tears. His Rosary was ever in his hand, and it was proved at the process of his canonization that the skin of the thumb and index finger of the right hand had become hardened and thickened by the constant handling of the beads. In this also none was like him. *Non est inventus similis illi.*

POINT III.— **He was a model of zeal.** Unable to preach the good tidings of the gospel to the negro slaves exposed for sale at Carthagena, he obtained leave to speak frequently with Saint Peter Claver, then a student at the College, and set his heart on fire with the love of those most abandoned of human beings. The future Saint Peter Claver used to call St. Alphonsus his "master." When dying he would have his portrait hung up by his bed. For Alphonsus had taught him the nature of perfect zeal. Who has ever worked greater wonders by his pious conversations? *Non est inventus similis illi.*

November 1.

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

POINT I.— The happiness which the Saints enjoy in heaven should **inspire us with the desire to go thither,** that we too may be for ever blest. This happiness includes everything which can satisfy soul and body. It has been purchased for us, and we have only to take possession of it. The Saints wish us to be united to them, and God desires still more that we should be united to them. Is anything more needed to make us desire to be with the Saints?

POINT II.— The **example set by the Saints** points out the way which will lead to this happiness. Their example is good for all, is sure and may be followed without misgiving. They were abounding in faith, estranged from the world and sin, and long-suffering. Can I flatter myself that I am walking in their footsteps?

POINT III.— The Saints, **through their intercession,** will obtain for us means to arrive at this happiness. They love us as their brethren; they can obtain everything from God. Let us appeal to them with confidence.

November 2.

ALL SOULS' DAY.

POINT I.— After having renewed our faith as to the reality of purgatory, let us bow down before the holiness of God, **Who cannot endure the slightest sin** in a soul beloved by Him. Let us then adore the severity of His justice, which punishes slight faults with such grievous suffering. We should be persuaded that those sins which appear to us but trifling are great in God's sight.

POINT II.— **These souls belong to God**; they are His children, His spouses, His temples; Jesus Christ suffers in them even as He suffers in the person of the poor. Religion obliges us to relieve them; charity urges us equally to this, since by a thousand ties we are bound to them;

their sufferings are great, and we alone can help them. These are so many urgent motives to excite us to so pious a practice.

POINT III.— In addition to this, **we gain a great deal by relieving these holy souls.** We store up the fruit of our charity: they will love us as their benefactors and will receive us joyfully when we enter into heaven. Let us examine ourselves as to what we are now doing and as to what we can in future do for them.

ON THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

POINT I.— **Three things afflict these holy souls**: absence from the God Whom they love; a conscience reproaching them with their sins and with negligence in expiating them; the fire which torments them. Let us fear this lamentable condition, and strive to avoid it.

POINT II.— **Three things console them** amid their sufferings: the assurance of their salvation, which they cannot forfeit; the hope that their punishment will soon be ended; the love of their God, Who is chastising them in mercy. Let us wish to be in purgatory, as many of the Saints have wished to be.

POINT III.— We can help them in three ways: **by prayer**, in begging God to relieve them; **by good works** and acts of penance; **by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and by Indulgences**, applying to them the satisfactions of Jesus Christ.

Let us at once make this holy resolution — that when we say or hear Mass, receive holy Communion, gain an Indulgence, fast, pray, or perform any good work, these Holy Souls shall have a share in all.

November 8.

OCTAVE OF ALL SAINTS.

POINT I.— Let us consider the surprising number of **Saints who have lived in the same state of life as we ourselves,** and who have sanctified themselves in the same occupations and with the same means we possess: *"We are the children of saints"* (TOBIAS ii. 18). We are doing what they did; we have only to do it well in order to be happy for ever as they are.

POINT II.— **If they have become Saints, it is not of their own strength:** like ourselves they were weak and wretched creatures, with the same passions and tendencies to evil as we have. Through the graces which accompanied their Baptism and their vocation, they have reached the perfection of their state of life. Let us then take courage; we have the same helps of grace and can as easily as they become Saints. *"Canst thou not do what they have done"* (ST. AUGUSTINE).

POINT III.— Are they not **richly rewarded** for the violence they did themselves in order to become Saints? They now possess God, and with God every kind of glory, pleasures and riches, and this for all eternity. Their poverty, mortification and self-restraint are ended, but their reward will have no end. Let us excite ourselves to the practice of their virtues, in the hope of enjoying the same glory.

November 13.

FEAST OF ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA.

ON THREE SAYINGS OF THIS YOUNG SAINT.

POINT I.—*Non sum natus præsentibus, sed futuris:* "I was not made for the things of this world, but was made for what is everlasting." This thought it was that caused him to despise whatever expectation he had of family honors and made him prefer the infamy of the Cross and the humiliations of the Religious life to all worldly advantages. Are not we made for heaven as much as he was? Why, then, should we cling to this world?

POINT II.—*Melius est cum obedientia parva facere, quam per propriam voluntatem magna præstare:* "It is better to do a little under obedience, than to accomplish great things while following our own will." In all things he had regard to God's commands, which he received through his superiors and through his Rule. If he labored or prayed, it was ever that he might fulfill God's will; this was the road along which he walked in his yearning to become a Saint. Are we treading the same path?

POINT III.—*Mater Dei est mater mea:* "The Mother of God is my Mother." The Blessed Virgin, to reward the devotion and trust of this holy novice, obtained for him the gift of contempt of the world, a vocation to Religious life, sinlessness of conduct, a happy death free from pain of body or anguish of mind and finally the veneration of the faithful. Let us protest anew to the Blessed Virgin that we choose her for our Mother.

November 25.

FEAST OF ST. CATHERINE.

POINT I.—St. Catherine was the valiant woman whom the Wise Man desired to find. She possessed strength of mind and knowledge both human and divine; she laid bare the errors of paganism; she put to shame proud philosophers and changed them into good Christians. Let us sanctify our learning by good intention and saintly use of it, turning it to account to make God known and loved.

POINT II.—She possessed strength of heart; she rose superior to all the worldly advantages of her position. She generously despised all the offers which the pagan tyrant made to her. She had given her heart to God; all else was to her as nought. Let us avow to God that we desire

Him alone: *"For what have I in heaven; and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?"* (PSALM lxxii. 25).

POINT III.—**She had strength,** through love and unconquerable courage, **to endure all kinds of torture,** boiling caldrons, iron combs, wheels set with spikes, and sharp swords, which eventually deprived her of life. Let us wonder at the strength which grace gave her, and let us be ashamed of being so impatient under the very slight troubles we have to endure.

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